Flies in the Spiderweb

History of the Commercialization of Existence—and Its Means

Jorge Majfud

Illegal Humanus
San Diego-Acapulco

Flies in the Spiderweb. History of the Commercialization of Existence—and Its Means.
1st edition, June 2023.
© Jorge Majfud 2023 jmajfud@ju.edu
© Humanus 2023
© Humanus 2025
ISBN: 978-1-956760-41-5
humanus.info
editor@humanus.com
All rights reserved for any commercialization of the full text. Any part of this book may be reproduced or used by any graphic, electronic, or mechanical means, including photocopying or information and retrieval systems, provided the original text is not altered.

Some species of spiders, like the wasp spider, add zigzag designs to the center of their webs, constructed with white silk, which is capable of reflecting ultraviolet light. Scientists called *stabilimentum* this design due to its assumed structural function, later proven to be minimal or irrelevant. In 2012, Professor Kim Kil-Won and his team observed that webs including this decoration were more effective at attracting insects, capturing up to twice as many as other webs. According to Kim, "*by decorating the web with this stabilizer, spiders use a preexisting bias* [bias, prejudice] *in a prey animal, favoring surfaces that reflect ultraviolet rays*."[1]

Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology, 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Justification 9

I. MODEL OF INVERSE PROGRESSION

Alternate Variation of History 17
Descriptive Examples 22
Corollary 24

II. PREHISTORY: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

A NEUROLOGY OF PROPAGANDA 29

Caveman Strengths; Cyber Weaknesses 29
1. Fear and Desire 30
2. The Attraction to Bad News 34
3. Toxic Masculinity 36
4. Sadism and Pleasure. The Weak Must Be Eliminated 38
5. The Need to Fight: My Tribe or Theirs 39
6. The Need (and Obligation) to Believe 41
7. The Literature of Power 43
8. Give Me an Enemy and I'll Make You My Vassal 52
9. The Leader 54
10. We Are Exceptional, the Chosen People 55
11. Ancestral Pornography, Intellectual Obesity 60
12. The Ping-Pong Culture 63
13. The Urgent News 67
14. The Oracle 70
15. Propaganda by Repetition, Censorship by Forgetting 72
16. The Curve of Excitement 76
The Freedom of the Photocopier 79

III. THE IDEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

CAPITALISM AND LIBERALISM 83

Something Went Wrong 83
Fossils of Capitalism 87
The Fossilization of Capitalist Language 89
The Liberal Utopia That Never Existed 91
The Leaf Before the Forest 97
The Forest Before the Tree 98

IV.THE BIRTH OF THE EGO-COMMODITY

PRIVATE PROPERTY, IMPERIAL DEMOCRACIES 104

The Industrial Revolution That Died at Birth 104
The Gestation of Anglo-Saxon Capitalism 111
The Birth of Capitalism 120
Abstraction, Privatization, Change, and Continuity 126
Monarchies and Feudal Lords; States and Liberals 134
Fiefdoms, Corporations, and Liberal Democracies 138

PRIVATIZATION, MARKET SOCIETY, EGO-COMMODITY 140

A New Human Species 140
The Privatization of Land—and of Subjects 142
John Locke: The Land Belongs to Those Who (Do Not) Work It 145

Feudalism and Capitalism Cross Paths—and Procreate 154
The Free Market 156
Land, Capital, and the Narrative of Freedom 162
NEW FORMS OF COERCION 164
The Abstract Dogma 164
The Power of Neo-Feudal Liberals 165
Ideology of the Judicial System 168
Narratives 170
Hijacked Democracies. Freedom for the Elite 172
Post-Capitalist Money. Financial Fantasy 176
DEBT AND NEOCOLONIALISM 180
The (First) Dollar Diplomacy 180
Your Debts Are Your Problem; Mine Too 181
Forgive Us Our Sins 183
Aid for Progress—of Our Hegemony 185
Below and on the Margins 187
Modern Slavery 190
THE ABSTRACT EMPIRE OF THE DOLLAR 194
The Novel Illusion of Equality 194
Long Live the Deficit 198
Dollar, Faith, and Trembling 200
Taxes for Them, Bonds for Us 207
POST-CAPITALISM: THE AGONY OF A CIVILIZATION 211
The Theology of Money 211
The Gods and Their Financial Temples 215
The Commercialization of Existence 218
As Much as I Have, So Much I Am Worth 220
Narratives 223
The Same Ideas, the Same Opposite Results 227
Freedom, Democracy, and Property 230
The Right to Truth and the Right to Extermination 240
The Power of Words 248
The Struggle for the Semantic Field 251
Lobbies and the Administration of Legal Meaning 258
Cyber Tribes 260
What We Have Come To 261
V. HISTORY: THE (GEO)POLITICAL FRAMEWORK
A VERY BRIEF HISTORY OF MANIPULATION 269
Imperial Democracies, Solidarity Dictatorships 269
Freedom of Speech in Times of Slavery 271
Manifest Destiny 278
Political War and Cultural War 279
19th Century Photojournalism 283
Birth of Yellow Journalism 288
Psychological Warfare 292
The Danger of Foreign Ideas 294
The CIA and “Fake News” During the Cold War 299
Lumumba. Demonize and Let Others Remove Him 315
Cuba and the Media War with Different Resources 321
Mercenary Press 326
Conspiracy Theories and Critical Thinking 330
Freedom of Expression Under Surveillance 335

The Ideological Police. The Parallel Government of the FBI ... 340
The Parallel Government of the NSA and the CIA ... 345
Propaganda and Censorship in "The Free World" ... 356
Voice of America and Its Missionaries ... 363
Mercenary Writers and Editors ... 365
The Hundred Million Dead of Communism ... 373
The Protestant Factor: Action and Narrative ... 389
Fake News and Yellow Journalism ... 394
Super PACs, Super *Influencers* ... 397
LEGALIZED CORRUPTION ... 401
Illegal Only When It Can't Be Legalized ... 401
Tax Havens and Modern Pirates ... 404
Make It Look Legal ... 406
Lawfare for the Non-Aligned ... 408
Reality Passes; Fictions Remain ... 410
Espionage and Computational Propaganda ... 419
Secret Agencies: The Invisible Hand of the Market ... 419
Two Classes of Human Beings ... 425
We're Only Bad When We're Caught ... 429
Burn, Erase, and Lie with Art ... 435
Bad Leaks and Good Leaks ... 437
The Manipulation of Culture ... 442
Social Relations and *Astroturfing* ... 446
State Espionage, Private Manipulation ... 449
OSINT, Open Espionage ... 456
Rebellions and Inoculated Counter-Rebellions ... 457
The Prison Without Walls ... 458
Propaganda and the Metastasis of Historical Myths ... 461
Censorship in the Free World ... 464
Private Property, Censorship by Marginalization ... 467
Old Conflicts, New Instruments ... 475
Close Your Eyes, Believe, and Consume ... 476
The Logic of Political Combos ... 479
VI. POSTHISTORY: THE IRRELEVANCE OF REALITY
Left Hemisphere, Right Ventricle ... 486
Postcapitalist, Posthuman, Postreal ... 486
Traditional Press and Social Networks ... 492
New Social Networks, Old Narratives ... 500
Neomedievalism vs Enlightenment ... 504
Close Your Eyes and Believe ... 508
Social Networks Are Right-Wing ... 511
Enlightenment, Middle Ages, and Social Networks ... 517
The Dialectical Ping-Pong ... 522
The Paradigm of Commercialization ... 524
Attention Business, Distraction Strategy ... 535
The Business of Prejudice: Sex, Racism, and Much Anger ... 542
Trolls—amateurs, professionals, and mercenaries ... 547
Bots: Racism, Classism, and Class Struggle ... 549
Sexist Technology ... 554
The Cartels of Communication ... 555
Mercenary Platforms ... 557
The Truth Doesn't Sell; Lie to Me Slowly ... 564

Puritan Pornography 567
Advertising and the Power of the Personal 568
Denialism and Faith Above All and Everyone 570
Personalization of Propaganda 574
The Globalized Ego and the Freedom of the Mass-Individual 579
The Logic of Elections 581
Companies and Corporations 583
The Hijacking of Democracies 583
Successful Examples of Neocolonialism 592
Fascism and Liberalism 594
Fascism, Collective Narcissism, and the Fear of Freedom 596
Low Tech 599
VII. Is Another World Possible?
Possible and Inevitable 603
Civilizational Model Change or Extinction 603
Rescuing Language is Rescuing Consciousness 608
Crisis and Post-Anglo-Saxon Civilization 610
A Post-Dollar World 612
Power Structures, Colonization of the Future 613
The Difficult Exit from the Labyrinth 615
Cyborgs and Artificial Intelligence 616
Sociopolitical Systems 618
Socialist Families, Capitalist Societies 620
The Singular Paradox of the Chinese Renaissance 621
Geopolitics, Geoeconomics 624
Redistribution and Universal Wage 626
A World Without Hunger and Oppression 630
Technology, Weapon and Tool 632
Prohibit, Regulate, Survive 634
Wikipedia, a Case Study 636
Digital Democracies 637
Cooperatives and Workplace Democracy 638
Private Property 645
A New Civilizational Paradigm 647
Bibliography 651
Sources 656

Justification

NOT BY CHANCE, theories about "the white genocide" were already popular in the 19th century in Australia, the United States, and Northern Europe. This phenomenon exploded when white colonizers became aware that the majority of the planet's population was not white. This discovery spread panic in what was later called the "Civilized World," first, and the "First World" later, during the Cold War. The unbridled ambition and paranoia that had led them to enslave almost the entire planet reinforced their fear of being persecuted and exterminated as they had done to other peoples, driven by more fear, more military development, and unprecedented economic exploitation in human history.

But this racial obsession is not the sole focus of the Anglo-Saxon or Northwestern problem that, to a large extent, structured the world we have today. Throughout the birth and development of capitalism from the 16th century onward, we will see the obsession with economic profits at any cost as the driving force behind power accumulation, which matured into global imperialism and still survives and operates through various means. The verbalized excuse by poet Rudyard Kipling about "*the white man's burden*" to bring civilization to the inferior races has largely been abandoned, especially after the global conflict against the Nazis in World War II—a conflict far lesser in both death toll and duration than the racist practices of much of Europe and the United States in preceding centuries, which, unsurprisingly, served as inspiration for Adolf Hitler himself.

From the Cold War to today, imperialism has been exercised under different pretexts. In the global narrative, the word *blacks* was replaced with *communism*, while retaining the words *freedom* and *prosperity* (*development*), which were favorites of slaveholders and private companies that, since the 16th century, ravaged and vampirized the Americas, Asia, and Africa.

Today, more than three decades after the end of the Cold War, this narrative continues despite the failure to fossilize Islam as the primary enemy, particularly in liberal democracies like the United States, where fear no longer yields significant political dividends since it targets a sector of the population far removed from meaningful political influence in

domestic affairs. Nevertheless, it remains potent, especially in Europe, fueling a resurgence of fascist xenophobia, stoked by the stark perception of real economic, social, and narrative decline stemming from growing rebellion and resistance in neocolonies.

The same Anglo-Saxon fear of losing control (over nature, over themselves, and over other tribal-nations) persisted and expanded throughout the 20th century, employing every available resource: from (1) an obsessive military, economic, and arms-driven power to (2) a proselytizing narrative by the mainstream press, which is nothing more than the feverish Protestant sermon in its secular form.

Just as Protestantism separated faith from morality and capitalism divorced finance from economy, the mainstream press detached morality from business, becoming the perfect mercenary of capitalism and the Anglo-Saxon order. For the conservative backlash of the 1980s (during the two-year electoral campaign preceding Jimmy Carter's defeat at the hands of the actor from low-quality cowboy films, rigid stereotypes, and national myths, Ronald Reagan), outlets like *Newsweek* had published 57 articles on the need to increase defense spending, 46 of them advocating for more spending to defend against the age-old threat of the others, the inferior peoples. Thanks to this massive and well-orchestrated media campaign, public opinion among Americans was reversed—despite the fact that in 1970 (even amid the Vietnam War and the millions of dollars poured into the press to shape favorable public opinion), only 10 percent believed military spending was insufficient. Yet, unsurprisingly, in a society educated by mass media and the commercialization of life, this campaign successfully molded Public Opinion. By 1980, despite the Vietnam War having ended years prior, a clear majority now believed far more needed to be invested in *defense* and military armaments.[2]

According to white far-right terrorists like the El Paso shooter and their intellectual accomplices (from the Tea Party to no small number of self-proclaimed *libertarians*), "*the rage and the pride*" of Oriana Fallaci were justified: [3] *the others*, the Hispanics, were *invading* the United States, and thus the massacre was not an "imperialist reaction" but an "act of survival." In the manifesto published online shortly before entering the Walmart to murder 23 men and women who appeared "Hispanic," the killer wrote: "*My opinions on automatic weapons, on immigration, and all my other opinions predate Trump and his presidential campaign*."[4] Why the hell is it important *his* opinion, the opinion of a Self among at least 330 million other

citizens or inhabitants of the United States? Does the fact that he was heavily armed and determined to commit a massacre grant him the importance that other mortals lack?

In addition to the old racial fanaticism that has returned (as in the 19th century, presenting itself as the victim of its slaves, the displaced, and the colonized, while blaming them for self-victimization), we must add a more recent pathology: *the globalization of the Self*, which is nothing more than the globalization of the imperial metropolis, the illusion of the existence of a *free individual* who keeps repeating, as the media demands, that they are free despite all the evidence of being a crude copy. A product of consumer society, like the fifteen or thirty different brands of bottled and imported water in a supermarket.

As Fyodor Dostoevsky observed in the 19th century (a century before Andy Warhol), anyone can become a fleeting celebrity by committing a crime. In our time, it can be for any other idiocy. The new culture of the new media of fragmentation (individual and collective) has created, in each of the billions of inhabitants, a center of the Universe, where each one is Buddha, Jesus, Socrates, Newton, Rosa Luxemburg, Hitler, Milton Friedman, Margaret Thatcher, Barack Obama, and MrBeast. Each one assumes that the rest of humanity should pay attention to them because they have something important to say: *The* truth, that which the rest of humanity and the greatest minds in history were unable to see, even though few or none have the faintest idea of the millennial conversation that has shaped our world. They don't read; they write. They don't listen; they speak. They don't ask; they answer. They don't love; they hate. After all, their parents raised them by boosting their self-esteem every day so they could compete in a ruthless world of successful people and be happy—which is an oxymoron.

It's a global phenomenon. However, at least until well into the 21st century, this attitude, this ideology (like the rest of the cultural tics that entertain the world) has emerged and radiated from the political, economic, military, and cultural center of the world since the maturation of its slave system. For this very reason, to understand the roots of political and social phenomena in the Global North and South, in the East and West, it is necessary to study the tactical and technological innovations in the United States, whose culture, values, and ideology will continue to project even after it ceases to de facto dictate as the leading economic, and later military, power.

This book is merely an attempt to see more clearly how opinions have been created, the obvious truths that a necessary majority calls or assumes as *truths* in a world dominated and manipulated by money and the ideological narrative that stems from it. An advanced world, a world that has inherited centuries and millennia of scientific, technological, and social progress, but is incapable of overcoming its old fears, its conflicts, and the pain in all its most basic forms such as hunger, wars, greed, and social injustice perpetrated by a handful of men who have, in an incredibly effective way, hijacked the efforts of all humanity. A world trapped in a dying and oppressive system that represents itself as the paradigm of freedom, Capitalism, utterly incapable of confronting, let alone solving, the grave problems it has created, such as extreme social inequalities, exploitation, and hatred for those below, the collective neurosis of the commodification of existence, consumerism, and the profound climate crisis, for which, for the first time in its history, the very existence of humanity as a species is in question.

How has such an absurdity been possible? How have we gotten here? When did all this begin? These are the questions we attempt to answer here. The answer assumes that, unlike the traditional slave system in which slaves were subdued by the freedom of the white master to bear arms, contemporary slaves, to a much greater extent than 19th-century slaves, are their own overseers. It's not so much about the force of arms but the faith of the slave. It's not so much about the value of money but the collective faith that gives it value. It is not so much about the Sunday sermon but about the daily propaganda spewed by the media, controlled, as always, by a minority of the former masters and feudal lords now disguised as Successful Businessmen, the champions of freedom. Of *their* freedom.

Is there any way out of the labyrinth? If there is, it must begin with a new consciousness, a new system. To liberate consciousness, one must first liberate language, trapped in the web of media and culture. The other way to gain awareness is to wait for the terminal crisis, so that a few survivors might understand the grave drift of their ancestors—something that, in a state of desperation and extreme need, might never happen.

Before we begin, one final consideration about our conception of the logic of the present and of human history. Throughout this book, we will see a certain continuity in history, for example, from feudal lords to the richest men on the planet, passing through the millionaire

slaveholders and their liberal scribes; from the dispossession of English peasants' lands to the exploitation of colonies across the world, all under the ideology of the free market (which in practice is its opposite, classical mercantilism and, more recently, corporate) and the laws of supply and demand; from ecclesiastical sermons that legitimized the dispossession and accumulation of the medieval aristocracy to modern media and the most recent social networks… It is not necessary to consider that history is a rigid and inevitable process just because we can extract a fairly clear logic from the chaos of events that have ultimately materialized. It is possible to think that, just as the European Middle Ages interrupted other earlier and simultaneous processes of development, we can also think that many other worlds, many other processes of development (China, India, Africa, Latin America) were interrupted and extinguished by the eventual predominance of one, such as English capitalism, its obsession with private property and profits over any other right, including the right to life, and its state of permanent war.

We can only vaguely speculate about "what could have been," but we can affirm that these processes were interrupted by the military, economic, and ideological force of one of them (the most violent of all), to the point of claiming all the credit for contemporary progress by comparing itself to any other development option in its earlier stages of interruption, that is, comparing the 20th and 21st centuries to the 16th and 17th centuries.

This book, which before cuts and mutilations was around a thousand pages, is conceived and dedicated to a few readers, some humans of the late 21st century. Why would anyone undertake such an absurd project? Well, no one, not even its author, could ever answer that question. But here it is, the purpose, the question, and the book.

JM, Jacksonville, April 2023.

I. Model of Inverse Progression

Alternate Variation of History

ALTHOUGH THE WESTERN REPRESENTATION OF TIME continues to be a line where the future is forward and the past is backward, reality insists on proving older, more contemplative cultures right: the past is forward and the future is backward, which is why we can only see the former and not the latter. But predicting the future has been more important to humanity than finding the goose that lays the golden eggs.

In the work routine, for example, the most important element in any job application is the resume and the reference letters of the individual or the applying company. In any case, the section on projects and objectives is much smaller and less relevant than the rest, which refers to the applicant's background, whether ethical or professional. Even though the employer is interested in what the candidate has to contribute in the future, when reading the resume and references, they always focus on analyzing the applicant's past to form a vague idea of the future. Even artificial intelligence systems that read applications, whose goal is to predict a candidate's behavior, do so exclusively based on their background.

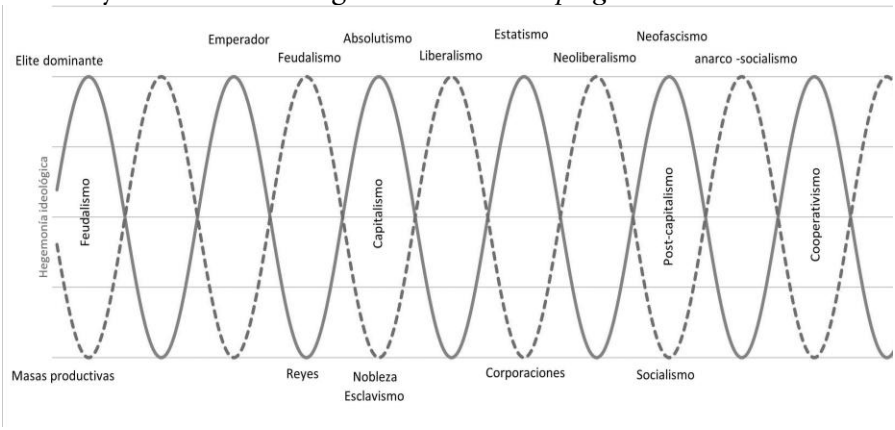
On a larger scale, sociology and economics do the same: their main tools of understanding and prediction are not in equations but in history. This was already recognized by John Maynard Keynes when, after predicting the tragic consequences of the impositions on defeated Germany in World War I, he failed to foresee the great collapse of markets and economies in 1929. From his obsessive search for a pattern in the stock market, he came to recognize that the unpredictability of the economy is due to the "animal factor" of human psychology. Of course, he did not observe that the animal factor in humans is far more complex and unpredictable than in other animals.

Economists themselves have observed that even today, when one of them manages to predict a crisis, it is due to luck, not to any objective calculation. Out of hundreds and thousands of predictions made by economists before the great crisis of 2008, few specialists were correct. One of them was the economist Nouriel Roubini, who, after becoming famous for his prediction (which he attributed to his intuition, not to a

mathematical calculation), continued making predictions that never materialized—even the nose can be wrong.

However, human history is not a succession of chaotic and disconnected events. It not only rhymes but also allows for the identification of certain common elements, certain patterns, such as the cyclical crises of capitalism described by Marx. It is also true that the search for patterns has its dangers, not because patterns do not exist (like the physical and psychological stages of human beings) but because their simplifications often lead to wrong and even opposite conclusions.

One of the simplest and most general abstractions derived from this study is a model we might call *the inverse progression model*.



(figure 1)

For reasons of space, for this model of history, we will limit ourselves to considering the last thousand years, analyzing only the last five centuries and focusing in more detail on our time. In this sense, we can observe that each period reacts against the previous one and crystallizes its demands, but, in all cases, it is a matter of opposing ideological narratives that serve the same goal: the accumulation of power in a dominant minority, usually the one percent of the population, through the exploitation of the rest by the exercise of physical coercion first, followed by narrative proselytism and, finally, consolidated by "common sense" and the obvious truths created by the media. Once the economic system convenient to the minority is exhausted by the growing inverse consensus of the majority (Christianity in the time of Constantine) or a new minority with growing power (the capitalist bourgeoisie of the 17th century), it is replaced by the alternative claimed by those below (movements against racism, sexism)

and, finally, captured, hijacked, and colonized by the dominant minority. In this way, we can see a continuity between opposing ideologies, such as, for example, feudalism and liberalism, rural slavery and industrial corporatism, monarchical absolutism and Soviet statism.

We start from the axiom that the human condition is the result of a dialectic between a historical component and an ahistorical one that precedes it. We will focus mainly on the observation of the first element of the pair, history, but we will consider its ahistorical component as always present, as are psychic and physiological needs.

On the other hand, this model of reading history is based on another ahistorical component, denied for more than half a century by poststructuralist thought: the dualism of action and reaction in human action and perception. For example, in liberal democracies, elections are almost always decided by a coin toss, that is, by two or three percent of the votes. If not by one percent. In many other aspects of individual and social life, the complexity of reality is often reduced to a pair of opposites, from religions (good-evil, angel-demon, yin-yang), politics (right-left, state-private enterprise, socialism-capitalism, liberal-conservative, rich-poor) to any other aspect of intellectual and emotional life: up-down, white-black, forward-backward, cold-hot, pleasure-pain, inside-outside, euphoria-depression, etc.

In June 2016, in an interview about the possibilities of Donald Trump's victory in the November elections, we mentioned this pattern and this emotional component in political elections, whereby if a goat were to compete with Mahatma Gandhi, after a certain period of electoral campaigning, the goat would close the supposed logical advantage of the rival candidate.[5] In June 2016, most polls and analysts dismissed a Trump victory. As in the 1844 elections, when everyone laughed at the intellectual shortcomings of candidate James Polk. In 2016, the difference in favor of Hillary Clinton was two percent of the total votes (though Trump was elected president due to the electoral college system inherited from the slaveholding era). In 1844, James Polk won the election by one percent, which ultimately led to a radical change in the history of the world in the following century.[i]

Capitalism emerges as a novelty and reaction (though neither intentional nor planned) against monarchical absolutism, which in turn had

[i] We explained this in *The Wild Frontier* (2021).

arisen as a reaction to feudalism and the power of the landowners. Its economic and ideological system opposes the feudal and absolutist systems while simultaneously drawing from both, and later, it ends up reproducing them with the consolidation of economic and financial corporations, through a radically different culture: the oligopolistic power of transnational corporations served by weaker neocolonial states and protected by central metropolises with almost absolute powers, expressions of democratic political systems indebted to dictatorial economic systems.

The new capitalist class, the bourgeoisie, founds and grounds its revolution in democratic opposition to kings and absolutism, but once it becomes the dominant class, spider-like, it does not abandon the tradition of minority accumulation over the majority. Since its banner is democracy, it cannot abandon it once power is monopolized, but must *disguise it* to continue the dynamic of appropriating the wealth-power of the majority. In this way, it was possible that *throughout the Modern Age, the most brutal empires in the world were democracies*. Its ideology, liberalism and more recently neoliberalism, also emerges as a critique of the power of the minority of its time (monarchical absolutism) and becomes the narrative that justifies the dominant power of the new minority, corporate and imperial, articulated by economists functional to the current power with a veneer of science and material objectivity. At the center of the new neoliberal narratives lies a purely ideological and cultural component: the reduction of human existence to a single goal: *the pursuit of individual profit at any cost*, even at the price of the most radical dehumanization, the simplification of the human being as a producing-consuming machine, and the destruction of the planet. All in the name of democracy and freedom.

Liberals are the continuation of feudal lords, opposed to absolutist kings (to central governments), but they cannot renounce the banner of freedom and democracy, even though they only have the words of these two principles, repeated mechanically like a rosary. By freedom, they mean the freedom of capitalist lords, of the minorities in financial power. By democracy, they mean that electoral system that can be bought every two or four years or, as Edward Bernays, the inventor of modern propaganda, will summarize, that system that tells people what to think for their own good.

In all cases, we will see a progressive divorce between narrative and reality until a new super crisis, a social and civilizational paradigm shift, causes both to collapse. The more words like *freedom* and *democracy* are

hijacked and repeated, the less relevance they have. A reality creates a dominant narrative-web, and this narrative sustains the reality so that it does not dissolve in its own contradictions. To achieve this, the narrative resorts to religious sermonizing, in our time dominated by mass media.

In this study, we will analyze the most significant moments of the last four centuries of this dynamic. Based on the "Inverse Progression" proposal illustrated earlier, we will begin by projecting the same logic to earlier periods in the following scheme, which, without a doubt, must be adjusted in its details for greater clarity for different readers.

Scheme of Ideological Pairs

Periods	Dominant		Resistant	
	Monocratic	**Polycratic**	**Monocratic**	**Polycratic**
Antiquity		Polytheisms	Monotheisms	
Classical Middle Ages	Empires			Tribes/Provinces
		Confederation Republics Caliphates	Dictatorships Empires regional	
	Catholic Church			Non-canonical Christianities
		Feudalism	Monarchy	
Modern Era	Catholic Monarchy			Protestantism Liberalism
		Liberalism Federalism	Monarchy Centralism	
	Imperialism			Anti-colonialism
		Slavery Confederation	Nation, Union	
19th Century	Nation-Empire			Colonies
20th Century		Corporate Capitalism	State Capitalism	
	Fascism Stalinism			Socialism Anarchism
		Liberal Capitalism	State Socialism	

	State Capitalism			Social Democracies, Unionism
		Neoliberalism Neofeudalism	Capitalist Socialism	
21st Century	Militarist Capitalism			Cooperative Democracy
		Cooperative Democracy	Communist Capitalism	

Descriptive Examples

BEFORE WE BEGIN, LET'S PROVIDE A FEW brief examples. When capitalism emerged, feudalism simultaneously transformed into anti-monarchical liberalism in Europe and, later, into slavery against the central government in the United States. This *ideocultural* tradition persists today in the Southern principle of "defending state independence," the same principle that led to the Civil War to maintain slavery over a century ago and later the transformation of slaveholders into CEOs and boards of dominant corporations.

Today, neoliberals repeat the imperial rhetoric of the *free market* when, in reality, they refer to the earlier school they refuted, *mercantilism*. Mercantilism was a system of currency accumulation that, to a large extent, practiced the interventionism of imperial states to protect their own economies and destroy those of their colonies through protectionist policies and forced purchases at gunpoint. Not without irony, the ideology of the capitalist free market ended the free market. What we have today, five centuries later, is corporate mercantilism, where corporations are no longer medieval guilds but the same feudal lords who accumulate more power than monarchies. Today, the surplus (capital accumulation) prescribed by the mercantilists of the past does not reside in national governments but in the neo-feudal lords of finance. Conversely, countries manage debts.

In the United States, as in other countries, the competition between two political parties will eventually lead to a role reversal, as with the Southern slaveholding Democrats and the Northern liberal Republicans in the past. The inverse identification of Southern Confederates with the Republican Party, to some extent starting with Franklin D. Roosevelt, or perhaps earlier during the Progressive Era, and of the leftist Democrats,

follows this model and leads us to predict that it will eventually reverse again, especially given some demands of the Republican right that align with old demands of the Democratic left. I suspect this crossover and inflection will occur sooner in their disputes over international policy, which have never been very antagonistic. In chapters like "Social Networks Are Right-Wing," we will provide a more recent case.

If we consider the immediate present and a projection into the future, we can see the case of the United States during Postcapitalism. Only in the last century, the superpower experienced the sine wave of the Inverse Progression in an accelerated manner, with periods of fifty years. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, progressive policies not only migrated from the Republicans to the Democrats but also established the paradigm for the next fifty years. This paradigm strengthened unions, made possible the creation of State Social Security, and allowed government intervention in the economy without major questioning. This cycle ended with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 and the triumph of the neoconservative-neoliberal reaction, also a consequence of the global crisis of the 1970s. In all cases, ideological changes were followed by transmutations and travesties of the elites at the top of the social power pyramid to maintain continuity amidst change.

Today, fifty years later, the system is once again in crisis for the third time, with minor symptoms but major causes. For the United States, it is not yet a massive economic crisis, but it is already a crisis of hegemony that will end its monetary privileges and, later, geopolitical ones. As happened with the crisis of the Spanish Empire in 1898, this country will have to turn to deep introspection.

This megacrisis will likely occur in the 2030s or 2040s, and it will be a new opportunity, judging by the dynamics of the Inverse Progression, for new generations to reorganize themselves into a system removed from neoliberalism, from capitalism as an existential framework, and to question the postcapitalist dictatorship with atomized options but with the common factor of a less consumerist and more cooperative politics and philosophy. The death of the capitalist paradigm will not mean the automatic disappearance of its institutions, but rather a new way of seeing and living in the world. Extending the theory of the Inverse Progression, it would not be an exaggeration to predict that, even if the two-party system remains, the current Republican Party, hijacked by the nationalist far-right, could even switch roles again in a few decades and represent these

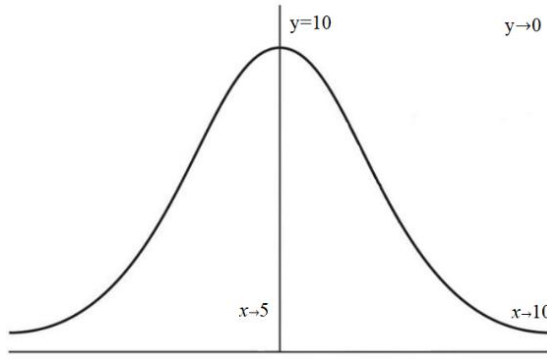
new aspirations that in the past century were associated with the left, while the Democratic Party would return to its 19th-century role of representing the conservative, corporate, and Eurocentric South. But this last point would be a detail.

In the 21st century, another pair begins to invert: a large number of center-left politicians and governments position themselves in favor of the "free market" and trade agreements (which have little to nothing to do with a free market but rather guarantee, in secret agreements like the TPP, the freedom of investors) while other conservative right-wing governments, such as that of Donald Trump, align with the traditional protectionist line of the left. While in the West the neo-feudal model represented by mega-companies and corporations whose powers surpass those of the states signifies not only the death of classical capitalism but also a return to its socioeconomic predecessor, feudalism, in China the system of state capitalism centered on the Communist Party is a confirmation of the monarchical model, where the fiefdoms (the corporations) are subordinated to the State.

Corollary

IN A CARTESIAN GRAPH we can place on the x-axis a progression ranging from (a) absolute government (x=0) to (z) absolute and self-regulated anarchy (x=10) and on the y-axis we distribute the degree of religious fanaticism, starting from (a') a radically secular or atheist society (y=0) to another (z') theocratic or sectarian society (y=10). We could speculate that in secular societies with centralized governments, like China, their position would be: $x\rightarrow0$; $y\rightarrow0$. The Middle Ages or Feudal period could be placed at the top of the curve ($x\rightarrow5$; $y\rightarrow10$) with a fragmented political power, that of the feudal lords, but not anarchic-democratic. The extreme $x\rightarrow10$; $y\rightarrow0$ signifies a break with the Middle Ages where the fragmentation of power has surpassed the maximum curve of religious sectarianism to render it ineffective as a ligament (religion, *re-ligare*) of the concentrated and independent powers of the feudal lords of the Middle Ages or the financial elites of our time. Obviously, the crossing of this critical point

($x \to 5; y \to 10$) cannot occur without a general upheaval, a conflict likely on a global scale.



(figure 2)

II. Prehistory: The Psychological Framework

A NEUROLOGY OF PROPAGANDA

Caveman strengths; cybernetic weaknesses

(16 neural fossils)

THE CENTRAL IDEA OF THIS CHAPTER could be summarized as follows: what helped us survive as a species for thousands of years has become our greatest weakness. These ancestral traits are exploited as vulnerabilities by the current social power structure. Today, organized economically and culturally by the capitalist system (especially financial and consumer capitalism). Just as industrialization (not necessarily capitalist) represented a strength and human progress just three centuries ago, it has now become one of the main factors of capitalism, which has quickly become the only social system in history capable of casting doubt on the existence of the human species and even the rest of life on the planet.

But beyond this reality that turns a virtue into a weakness, we will briefly focus on some characteristics of human psychology that were once developed to benefit us as a species and are now exploited by an elite of cannibals against us. Although individuals tend to have an overly generous image of themselves and believe we are rational beings, we are generally the opposite. In the individual, familial, social, and political arenas, we tend to act on irrational impulses, much more like the behavior of a soccer fan in a stadium than that of a scientist observing and manipulating mice in a lab or a calculator determining the concrete dosage and the amount of iron needed for a reinforced concrete beam.

Let's review those constitutional components of our ancestral psyche, those ahistorical traits our species developed for its own survival and that each historical moment (in our case, the capitalist system) exploits to the fullest for its own benefit, like a spider extracting the juice from flies

trapped in the web where their own desires led them. I understand this is a personal list that can and should be improved by other contributions:

1. Fear and desire

OUR SOCIETIES ARE SHAPED by the commercialization of life, which, in the United States, existed long before (what was the slave system if not that?) but began to radicalize into its current forms in the early 20th century. The market and its media pulpit are based on two basic and primitive feelings that made the survival of the species possible: fear and desire. Two strengths that are now weaknesses. For the market, desire focuses on its sexual impulse (without sex, neither cars nor songs are sold) and on the promotion of fear.

In hijacked democracies, politics is a market, not only of power but in service to the financial market. Therefore, fear and desire are also its two fundamental components. Desire (utopia) has been a bastion of the left, just as fear (dystopia) has been for the right. Since we are in a clearly dystopian historical moment (we no longer try to imagine a just and happy world, but to save it from social and climate catastrophe), the right sells more easily.

This is what is happening across much of the West and, in particular, in the ideological center of that commercialized world, prone to the irrational narrative of commercial propaganda and religious sermons, detached from all evidence. Hence, for example, election deniers are usually right-wing parties. What is more denialist than a religion or consumer culture?

Political ads from the American right focus on instilling fear of immigrants, "gender ideology," and any group perceived as weaker for some reason: the *threat* from below (translation: the *fear* of those below). The ten million illegal immigrants, the most selfless workers in the country, collectively have a much lower crime rate than the rest of society, but they are the perfect target for the fear industry because not only can they not lobby like the Florida mafia, but they also don't vote. On the other hand, "gender ideology" is not a recent evil that will destroy humanity, as these politicians claim, but is older than the pyramids of Egypt: it is the

age-old machismo, with its need for power and its sexual fears. If they knew that the European aristocracy wore wigs, tights, and high heels (a symbol of masculinity, due to their use in horseback riding by the Arabs), that upper-class boys were dressed as girls until recently, as in the case of President F. D. Roosevelt, and that the colors pink and blue for gender were a recent invention of American stores, they would fall over backward. Or, more likely, they would deny it.

In politics, as in the market, there are two fundamental engines: fear and desire. Even more so in a culture based on consumption and a mercantile and success-driven system, almost always presented as if it were a natural organism governed by a single law, the Law of Supply and Demand. This same culture feeds on the idea that both the market and its primary Law are logical, abstract, and universal expressions; not a system and a law regulated and directed by a hegemonic ideology and its different local policies.

Capitalism promotes desire and punishes pleasure. Desire is at the root of all commercial advertising, but the fear market is also important, from the sale of private security services to antivirus software. In politics, as a strategy and creator of reality from fiction, fear is even stronger than desire or hope. Looking at the most important phenomena of the last two hundred years, we could say that perhaps the left focused more on liberal claims regarding the desires of the underprivileged, from the abolition of slavery to the claims of sexual, racial, or national minorities. Fear, on the other hand, has been the central component of fascism, which not only, in the name of freedom, required the individual to submit to a leader or an ethnic or nationalist group, with the gaze always fixed on the past (a common factor with religions) to save their existence from the "dangerous others" whom we must fight and invade before they do it to us. That is, the real fear of the upper class adopted as the imaginary fear of the lower class against others even lower, due to their economic, military, numerical, or legal status: peasants, artisans, Jews, blacks, Indians, immigrants, homosexuals, Muslims, the poor, the homeless... The middle class has always feared a possible revolt from below more than a constant and natural dispossession from above, which is why fascist fear takes hold so easily every so often, even among those at the very bottom who have risen a step to the lower middle class.

Art, though with a different purpose, is also full of works that combine these two powerful engines of psychological and social life. The most

raw examples are found in fairy tales and stories about mysterious beings on all continents. In ancient Greece, this fear-desire impulse was illustrated with satyrs. A thousand years later, the oldest surreal story we know today as the tales of the Brothers Grimm but which preceded them by many centuries, is that of *Little Red Riding Hood*. Like in a dream, this story (especially in its original versions before the Brothers Grimm and Disney sanitized it with bleach) mixes sex, cruelty, mystery, deception, and death in ways as implausible as they are powerful, as evidenced by the age of the tale: in 2023, the innocent Little Red Riding Hood will turn a thousand years old, surviving the danger of the wolf in the forest and in the country house. But of the erotic pair fear-desire, the first term represents the moralization of others to repress the second pair, which leads to temptation and the breaking of the prohibition. The prohibition represents civilization, the law, civil or religious. Self-denial, self-repression, renunciation are these same laws internalized.[ii] For these same reasons, in public expressions, from literature, cinema to political sermons, fear is the visible face of the moon. On the other side is desire, the need for transgression, for change.

Fear and desire also fill detective novels, mystery stories, commercial films, and even art-house cinema. Crimes, rapes, beauty and the beast, vampires sinking their teeth into the sensual neck of the defenseless woman... Not to mention the always recurring ancient Greece, with its sexual stereotypes: rational men had small penises, like Michelangelo's David or Adam, while the dangerous and lazy satyrs of the forest (Dionysian, irrational fantasies) were depicted with penises the size of a pack mule. The same perception is evident in the letters of 19th-century white slaveholders, who feared that the liberation of Black slaves would lead to the mass rape of white women, when the reality indicated the opposite: not only did Black men suffer under the whip and the gun, but the rapes were committed by the masters and employers against their Black female slaves or servants, who were almost always underage, as was the case with the Founding Father of American democracy, Thomas Jefferson, and practically all other honorable slaveholders from Canada to Argentina. This pornographic fear-desire led to the lynching of thousands of freed Black people after the Civil War in the United States. Preventive—and legal—

[ii] Regarding the tension between ethics and aesthetics, between religious renunciation and the Dionysian experimentation with the world, we paused in *Critique of Pure Passion* (1998).

lynchings, as recommended by the educator, feminist, and first female senator from Georgia, Rebecca Latimer Felton, who in 1898 advised lynching Black men who won elections in North Carolina, arguing that the more educated and politically involved Black men became, the greater the threat they posed to the virginity of white women.6

The same pattern has been exploited for generations by the powerful pornography industry, which thrives on depictions of Black men with white women. In other words, the fear of power opens a release valve in its own imagination. It is the tradition of the festival that breaks social rules and overturns the political order once or twice a year, in contrast to the need for ritual, which, both in religions and psychological tics, requires the repetition of a certain order to feel some control over the uncertain future, the unexpected, the feared, and what is truly beyond control.

According to Stephens-Davidowitz in his analysis of Big Data (*Everybody Lies*, 2017), women consume twice as much pornography featuring violence against women as men do. It's unnecessary to clarify that this does not imply any moral or ethical judgment, as it refers to psychological phenomena.[iii] One of the characters in my novel *Crisis* (2012), one of those characters detested by their own author, summarized it this way: "*In the end, after all this nonsense passes, the bored housewives, the proper feminist professionals, desire a man who will humiliate them in bed. Only then do they recover their forgotten orgasmic capacities, desiring everything their education and good morals abhor…*"[7] It's in the index of any Freudian book: in fiction, in folk tales, sex has been covered by a thick layer of symbolism, as in dreams. It must be added: covered by the most visible and repressive term: fear.

This constitutive factor of fear and desire also has an explanation in the deepest prehistory. In 2008, psychology professor at the University of Michigan (a member of the Biopsychology and Affective Neuroscience Laboratory) Kent Berridge observed that dopamine, originating from the nucleus accumbens (a central area of the hypothalamus) and motivating animals in their search for pleasurable rewards (food, sex, drugs), is also responsible for the production of fear. Once the Michigan team inhibited dopamine production in mice, not only did their desire for rewards

[iii] A possible discussion about how this consumption encourages or perpetuates macho violence remains open, but far from the logic that leads to prohibiting and criminalizing the consumption of pedophilic images.

decrease, but so did the anxieties produced by fear, simultaneously. The same team managed to identify the areas of the brain that are actually related to fear and desire, and found that they were separated by mere millimeters.[8] Both pleasure and fear are responsible for the survival success of the species.

Once again, it is no coincidence that the powers of the moment, from classic authoritarian regimes to liberal democracies dominated by market ideology and a small number of feudal lords called *corporations*, have exploited and amplified these two constitutional reactions of each individual for their own benefit. From political speeches to massive advertising campaigns and, more recently, the algorithmic dynamics of social media.

2. The Attraction to Bad News

WE'RE DRIVING ON A HIGHWAY and, suddenly, another damn traffic jam. We're annoyed by the inability to move at maximum speed. We vent that anger by imagining and insulting someone who, in trying to go faster than everyone else, ended up scraping another car and, as a result, hundreds, if not thousands, of other responsible drivers have to move at a snail's pace for ten, twenty minutes. When the flow of cars begins to return to its normal speed, we suddenly see two or three wrecked cars on the side of the highway.

What is the most rational thing we can do in this situation? The police and paramedics have already taken care of the situation. There is nothing we can do to help someone who is no longer there or someone whose life will be forever marked by that place and, above all, by that day which will return again and again for the rest of their days. The rational thing for us to do is to look ahead, focus on the traffic, and avoid another accident…

But no. It's impossible not to look at the tragic scene. A person lies on the ground, apparently covered by a sheet or something similar. Another is being carried on a stretcher to the ambulance. Why do we have to look at a scene that from the start promised nothing good? We look once, twice, three times until, by inches, we almost hit another car, whose driver

was also looking at the wrecked cars and the bodies on the side. The rational thing is to focus on the road, on the heavy traffic of the highway, but we choose the irrational: to look at the bad news, the crime reports, the updates on the latest war.

We do the same thing every day. News programs dedicate entire sections to accidents, murders, shootings, wars, and all kinds of toxic information that in no way serves to reduce crime in a city or, doubtfully, to raise pacifist awareness in the rest of the world. From a political, ideological point of view, it will be used to amplify or minimize a reality, but in any case, the building material comes from the deepest human nature.

This fundamental irrationality has no exceptions because it comes from our genes, which evolved over tens of thousands of years thanks to this attraction to bad news. Back then, this attention-attraction to bad news had a utility for the survival of the individual, the family, and the group. If people had focused more on what was going well, perhaps they could have lived better, but to survive, they had to pay more attention to the negative: a beast prowling around the village; a foreign tribe approaching ours; a stranger coming near the farm; a plague that took the neighbor or a city on the other side of the river.

For hundreds of thousands of years, our survival depended on paying attention to bad news, not good news. It didn't make us happier, but evolution doesn't care about our happiness, only the preservation of the group or the species. Those who, by genetic accident, were born with the ability to be happy with little died before reproducing. Those who were obsessive, sometimes paranoid, sometimes fanatical about some impossible story, were more prepared, more alert, and took the women left by the happy, naive ones. And they reproduced like rabbits.

The culture that later emerged in complex societies, societies of hundreds of millions of individuals, tried to correct this genetic reality that, for hundreds of thousands of years, had emerged from smaller tribes. It was probably the first contradiction between our good prehistoric genes and our bad responses to the new reality of the first civilizations. But the remnants of the attraction to violence, along with sex, remain and are the primary material for work in a hyper-commercialized culture and a civilization based on consumerism. Among them are the media, which have ceased to be a public service and have become a business. In countries composed of several countries, like the United States, local channels, often

owned by national conglomerates, prioritize crime reporting.[iv] National or international networks don't do anything very different: they report wars or promote the eternal fears that sooner or later lead countries and peoples to wars or all kinds of civil violence, almost always with a strong racist, classist, or nationalist component (largely, three variations of the same).

But if this negativity helped us as a species for fifty thousand or hundreds of thousands of years, in our time it not only serves to poison our lives but also allows a few companies (in this case, in the information industry) to reap all the benefits by exploiting, amplifying, and translating into monetary gains a constitutional weakness of the human species that, for the most part, goes unnoticed.

In the United States, the mecca of media controlled by private corporations, the business of this evolutionary weakness is unquestionable. According to the Center for Communication and Social Policy at the University of California, by 1998, television programs centered on violence already accounted for 60 percent of all programming, and the trend was on the rise.[9] By 2012, Indiana University recorded that 70 percent of television programs for children contained violent content.[10]

This same research concluded that children could consume nonviolent programs if the market were capable of creating them. In other words, beyond the easy exploitation of human weaknesses by market ideology and its profits, there is something called *education and culture* that could translate ancestral energies into a higher level of civilization, essential for the survival of individuals and the human species.

3. Toxic Masculinity

THIS PREHISTORIC REALITY can also be observed in the repeated persistence of certain elements in the new digital culture. One of them, for example, consists of thousands of short videos about a boy who is bullied by a *bully*,

[iv] Various studies show that local channels dedicate between 25 and 50 percent of their news to coverage of violent crimes, which creates the effect of making the population believe that crime is always on the rise, even when it is decreasing in police statistics. (Lipschultz, J. H., Hilt, M. L. (2003). *Race and Local Television News Crime Coverage* and O'hear, M. Marquette *Law Review Marquette Law Review Violent Crime and Media Coverage In One City*, etc.)

often defending the vulnerable woman. The boy is sometimes a prisoner, a beer drinker in a bar, or a pre-university student. The boy is good. That is, he is either us or a member of our tribe, who are always good and are attacked without reason.

The formula is not an invention of *TikTok* or of videos from other social networks. It already existed in the era of cinema and Hollywood films, like Rocky Marciano. The same formula has been in practice for thousands of years. For the purposes of this study, let us recall the speech of Andrew Jackson in 1832 and many other presidents, newspapers, magazines, and television channels: "we were attacked without provocation"; "we had to defend ourselves"; "we will never forget."

After receiving mockery and several humiliating blows from "the other," our tribal hero (our alter ego) reacts and ends up delivering several devastating blows. The spectators, without exception (neither religious, nor political, nor ideological, nor social class), enjoy it. We enjoy the violence and justify it as the only way to respond to a prior aggression. Beyond whether we judge each situation separately and it is reasonable to think this way, what matters for this analysis is the popularity and repetition of the same formula with few variations. Why? Because the scene appeals to basic, primitive, prehistoric instincts, which say a lot about ourselves, who are unwilling to be analyzed in this way.

The masculinity of the gladiator, of the tribal warrior (later sublimated in the idol of soccer and the genocidal general of some distant war) was functional for the salvation of the tribe, of our group against the group of others. In the more complex societies of recent centuries, it is merely toxic masculinity that produces more problems than solutions. Like patriarchy: if it was ever justified in some form of feudal organization, for centuries it has been an obstacle to the functioning of more contemporary societies.

The software that once served a system called Windows 95 has now become an obstacle, if not a virus. Thus, the genetic software that once served a human survival system is now a virus, an obstacle to progress or, simply, the organization of a functional society that aspires to survival as a species.

4. Sadism and Pleasure. The Weak Must Be Eliminated

FOR MILLIONS OF YEARS, nature has used pleasure to drive individuals to take risks, to invest energy that initially did not result in any gain, unlike defense or alertness in the face of imminent danger, which we discussed earlier. An action that does not provide an immediate benefit must be rewarded with pleasure. This has been the case with sex (thanks to genetic diversity, faster evolution and, therefore, more effective adaptation to environmental changes were possible) and, very likely, we can speculate, it has also been the case with sadism and mockery.

Sadism, the pleasure derived from others' pain, is another primitive impulse that has leaped from the marginal corners of civilized society (from the dark corners of some poor neighborhood or the illuminated corners of some rich office) to the screens of the entire world.

Except in the secret prisons maintained by dictatorships and democracies, this sadism is not about the physical sadism of torture, but rather a low-intensity sadism. However, this low intensity is the requirement to keep those dark energies within the legal and even moral frameworks of societies. At the same time, these two factors (low intensity and legality) turn sadism into a ubiquitous and transparent phenomenon, so much so that it becomes normalized and spreads until it becomes a global and transcultural phenomenon.

Like the previous reflexes, this weakness is also exploited by the market and by those in power. With an added incentive: in a ruthless world where all individuals are desperate to find a source of survival, sadism, the *bully* is no longer a gratuitous exercise but often transforms into a source of income. I'm referring to the *YouTubers* who have developed and multiplied this market. The *YouTubers*, whether they are millions of failures who spend years trying to make a hundred dollars or those few successful ones who make thousands of dollars with each video mocking someone else, still represent and are part of the lower strata of the power pyramid. At the top are the platform owners, the big investors who find better utility in this culture of permanent mockery and insatiable frivolity. This empty culture provides a sense of freedom and satisfaction, not unlike what a drug addict might feel. In fact, several studies show or demonstrate that the overstimulation of video games or similar limitless activities is as addictive as cocaine. This culture of emptiness and perpetual

entertainment not only avoids critical thinking in a sufficient percentage of society (especially among the young) but also destroys their habit of unfragmented thinking.

Another virtue that in the past must have served to save the tribe from the burden of the weak and to reproduce the genes of the strongest has now turned into a toxic weakness, exploited by the powerful of the moment according to the rules and laws of the dominant system (capitalism), in favor of their own class tribes and against the rest of humanity.

5. The Need to Fight: My Tribe or Theirs

IN THE 21ST CENTURY, IDENTITY POLITICS has colonized both the left and the right, from the demands of majority minorities to the fanaticism of the hordes of minority majorities, from race and gender consciousness to racism and nationalisms. Although the phenomenon is new, it is not something entirely novel. The cultural war around identities has the force of visibility and the most primitive instinct, like identification with a tribe, a clan, an emotional center, whether religious, political, or sports-related.

The problem in complex societies, like modern ones, is that it serves to invisibilize larger conflicts through arbitrary opposites like city and countryside, civilization and barbarism, which the educator and later Argentine president Domingo F. Sarmiento made famous in the 19th century and which, even in the 21st century, makes even the poorest and most marginalized peons feel identified with their landowners, just as slaves identified with their masters to the extent that most African Americans today carry the surnames of their ancestors' owners and not a few fought for the Confederacy during the American Civil War. In other regions, like South America, peons identify with a culture, such as that of the gaucho, which leads the overwhelming majority of them to vote and be unconditional supporters of their wealthier employers who monopolize the top spots on electoral lists, while hating the poor members of the opposing party who identify with the cities. The same goes for the North and the South, whites and blacks… The exploitation of the master over the slave, the defense of the interests of those above and those below, becomes invisible or disappears. A rural peon and an industrial peon become players on

rival soccer teams, while the general and the soldier identify with the common cause of fighting the other army composed of other generals and soldiers they don't know.

On the other hand, apart from this arbitrary and irrational but millennial grouping, it is very likely that there is a universal conditioning of human beings to mobilize through preaching, sermons, harangues, and the more recent "motivational speech." Otherwise, it would be impossible to explain how traditionally, peasants have gone by the thousands (*militia*) to die in the wars of the nobles, of the elite who received and still receive the material and moral benefits from the spoils of their own and foreign lands. It is possible that the dynamic *proselytism-action* also has its roots in the long prehistory of humanity. That is, the vulnerability of the basic emotions described earlier, especially the negative ones like fear and anger, to the *narrative* of the chief or the leader of the family (the father), of the clan (the patriarch), of the tribe (the chief), and of the nation (the religious leader, the political leader).

None of the aforementioned groups, nor any of the administrators of the narrative-power of each, have disappeared. Just as a child learns to obey the word of the father (though in this case, it is a justified obedience) with periods of rebellion; just as the various tribal and religious leaders had the power to send entire peoples to war, so do our more civilized societies function with varying degrees of violence, depending on the historical moment of the inverse Progression curve. In all cases, the power of direct physical coercion, as in war or in a torture chamber, has been far less persistent and less ubiquitous than the omnipresent force of narrative. Through the narrative established by a prior tradition, a leader or a group articulates the comprehensibility of the world for the rest of their people, pushing them toward periods of greater peace or to war. Beyond weapons, the abstraction of money restricts and amplifies the freedom of one group over others, but social cohesion (for example, to carry out an act of collective fanaticism like a massacre or the defense of their own enslavement) almost always stems from the narrative of power. In some cases, counter-narratives to that power have reproduced that same cohesive power but on a smaller scale.

This is likely because for hundreds of thousands of years, both the understanding of the world and the organization of society were not based on any rational analysis but on the *emotional acceptance of a totalizing narrative*, generally myths, simple legends, and more complex religions.

Within this framework (which, for example, in medieval Europe was Christianity, while in the then-first world, the Arab and Persian world, it was Islam) the unifying narratives later became economic theories, racial ideologies, and ideologies of various kinds. All supported by propaganda. Propaganda acts as a missionary factor of the general framework, most often confirming it (the politically correct) and less frequently questioning it (rebellions, revolutions).[v]

In the chapters that make up the sections of this book called "History" and "Posthistory," we will delve into more detail on this phenomenon.

6. The Need (and Obligation) to Believe

FOR AT LEAST FIFTY THOUSAND YEARS, myths and legends explained the world, organized groups, tribes, societies, and promoted non-existent futures—like all futures.[vi] Common sense was reserved for immediate things, like keeping a vessel horizontal so its contents wouldn't spill. For everything beyond, from society (mostly invisible, incomprehensible, and uncontrollable) to life after the death of the individual, there was imagination. Not individual imagination but collective imagination. In fact, the

[v] In *The Narration of the Invisible* (2005) we referred to this factor as "a narration of a virtual reality [a] *logos* that makes the world intelligible for the subject reflecting on it. It is what we will call 'metaphysical space' […] a narration about metaphysical space with the corresponding use of a progressive definition of semantic boundaries, of defining as clearly as possible the limit between C(+) and C(-) […] what is seen in the metaphysical space of speculation as if it were an objective observation that a chronicler makes of a sports event or a scientist makes in their laboratory […] Language arises from physical space and only through metaphors and signic transfers can it reach to describe metaphysical space. However, in a reciprocal and symbiotic manner, metaphysical space will act on physical space in the form of myths, ideologies, cultural paradigms, etc."

[vi] Currently, this idea is attributed to the great historian Yuval Harari, although it is not difficult to find similar proposals in the history of thought. In an article titled "The Bombardment of Symbols" (Alai, May 20, 2008) we cited the study of a group of Spanish researchers who had arrived at the core of this idea: "*the extinction of the Neanderthals more than twenty thousand years ago —those gnomes and big-nosed dwarves that populate the traditional tales of Europe— was due to a fundamental inferiority compared to the Cro-Magnons. According to José Carrión from the University of Murcia, our Homo sapiens ancestors possessed a greater symbolic capacity, while the Neanderthals were more realistic and therefore inferior as a society. No one would believe in the myths of those ancestors of ours today, although their utility resembles that of Ptolemaic geocentrism, which in its time served to predict eclipses*".

Neanderthals were surpassed and, to some extent, exterminated by the prehistoric Westerners, the Cro-Magnons, due to their realism, their inability to imagine fantasies at the same level as our direct ancestors.

It is perhaps for this evolutionary reason (if things had been different, we wouldn't be here) that the need to believe in the impossible can be explained. Ramses II living forever; Moses parting the Red Sea in two; Noah placing a male and female of each of the billions of animal species on a wooden boat; Nostradamus predicting the fall of the Twin Towers centuries in advance… Beyond the millennial tradition (for some ancestral and perhaps neurological reason) of occupying children's intellects with fairy tales and more commercial fantasies like Santa Claus and the Three Wise Men. Isn't it simpler to tell children that their parents bought the gifts? Why this need and this pleasure in lying? Why all this expenditure of time and energy setting up scenes and false stories for children, if not for a conditioning that goes beyond cultures to the roots of a shared past?

Why? Because the impossible was called miracles, and miracles are not a product of uncontrollable chance but of divine intervention, of an absolute power with a superior human intelligence but devoid of higher emotions, with which one could establish a dialogue and negotiation. But that dialogue could not be rational. The superior intelligence of all and each of the gods and goddesses also lacked a single superior feeling or emotion. On the contrary, the gods reproduced the same human miseries that concerned humans: jealousy, selfishness, theft and legitimized plunder; racism and sexism without feelings of guilt; desires for revenge and extermination; promises of wealth, power, and eternal health to enjoy them. Perhaps some moments in the Gospels reveal an exception to this rule, such as the feeling and prescription to love even one's enemies; a prescription that was never, ever taken into account by their most fanatical followers, but quite the opposite. Generally, the gods were not much different from the Superheroes of 20th-century American popular culture: they all had superpowers, but not super intelligence and even less super feelings.

Therefore, the dialogue between the gods and the suffering creatures had to be based on faith, as faith is rooted in the deepest component of the human and animal psyche: the *fear-desire*. Moreover, in some cases, as in the biblical Genesis, understanding became a symbol of sin, the forbidden fruit. In not a few cases, as in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition, doubt, the lack of faith was considered a danger (sin) that had to be

eradicated through conversion, the threat of hell, and persecution or proselytism to prevent the contagion of bad examples from others.

This ancestral component (the need to believe in an impossible or improbable story) must be taken into account, like all the others, to explain contemporary phenomena. In this case, not only political, ideological, and commercial propaganda but even the most spontaneous *fake news*. Otherwise, it would be impossible to understand why, according to the studies we will see later, fake news are six times more likely to go viral than real news. One might think that fake news are funded by large conspiratorial organizations, which in many cases is true, but that does not explain why in the rest of the cases, when there is no organization behind it, the fake news spreads more and faster than verifiable news. Traditionally, it is a phenomenon similar to the rumor, the village gossip spread by a modest neighbor. It is possible that the suspicion or perception that the story is not entirely true triggers and enhances its viral nature.

7. The Literature of Power

WHEN HOMO SAPIENS LEFT THE TREES first and the savannas later to enter a new complexity created by themselves, the cities, they had to learn and adapt to the new rules of the new nature. Something similar is happening now: sapiens are leaving the three-dimensional cities to enter a new nature with its own laws. What has not changed is their vocation for power, when they have it, and for justice, when they lack that power. That ancestral need to turn others into "happy slaves."

Since the most primitive societies needed a unifying myth for a more complex exogamous functioning, the struggle to manage the foundational and teleological narratives, the means and propaganda were created simultaneously. Religions brought these two components to maturity thousands of years ago with proselytism and punishments for those who strayed from the dominant dogma of the victorious totem.

For thousands of years, stories were the primary means of transmitting knowledge, whether moral or practical, usually through emotion and aesthetics. They still are. Now, if the unifying myth (religious, ideological) had the functionality of organizing unity and power in a society,

the instrument to capture the individual's attention lay in its opposite, in novelty. This instrument is central both in literature and in news production. The goal of both is to capture attention with a referenced fact, a fact that is transmitted by the word and announces an important or vital event or describes it as past, that is, exposed to contemplation once stripped of the anxiety of uncertainty and danger. A story, a novel, or a film must capture the reader's attention and curiosity with the aim of delving into some human passion or, simply, to increase consumption. But while the goal of fiction and honest journalism is not to deceive the reader, the goal of propaganda and advertising, whether consciously or inadvertently, is precisely that. It is likely that in the origin of the stories told by our ancestors in Africa and later in Asia, fiction and non-fiction were one and the same. The greater sophistication of written history must have distinguished one from the other until, ironically, they were deliberately reunited with the development of modern technology. Religious narratives remained the exception, as the distinction between fiction and reality never depended on material facts but on faith.

At the beginning of the 17th century, the Catholic Church reached a new level of sophistication in understanding and producing propaganda. Not by chance, this instrument developed by the Vatican at the start of the great expansion of European powers across the world had a proselytizing and imperialist root. The narrative shifted from tribe and nation to a global narrative. On June 22, 1622, Pope Gregory XV issued the bull *Inscrutabili Divinae*, which established the "*Congregatio de propaganda fide*," an office known as "Propaganda," whose area of action was those countries where Catholicism was not the majority.

One of the Catholic Church's enemies, Protestantism, from its inception made intensive use of theological propaganda through the new technology of movable type and the mass publication of books and pamphlets.

Shortly after, in the secular era of the European Enlightenment, this function, freed from myths or religious beliefs, shifted to the press and secular ideologies of reason, liberty, and equality. In any case, both in their prehistoric and religious periods, the media responded to the political power of the time, whether it was an absolute monarchy or a democratic republic. It is obvious that in a democracy, the media and propaganda are more important than in a personal dictatorship, as they must overcome more institutional obstacles. Concentrated powers have always been able

to easily buy the dominant media, but they have not been able to as easily buy democracies, which is why they have used the media to manipulate democracies and adapt them to their interests. History shows that democracies have always been an obstacle to concentrated powers, which in our Western world have been, for at least a couple of centuries, the great capitals.

The seizure of indigenous territories by the Thirteen Colonies, the purchase of Louisiana without consulting its population (that is, the indigenous population), the taking of half of Mexican territory, and later, overseas expansion, could never have been carried out without this mechanism of conviction or unifying fanaticism, such as the myth of Manifest Destiny, invented by a journalist, John O'Sullivan, in the mid-19th century. Later came other myths, such as the myth of white genocide at the end of the 19th century in Australia and the United States, to justify the genocide of Black peoples around the world, a myth that inspired Adolf Hitler in Europe.

For all of this, the hijacking of technological innovations in media by the elites in power at the time was always necessary. It would suffice to recall one of the most classic and influential hijackings in history, such as the hijacking of the sacred books of the great religions. Without entering into religious and theological evaluations, one could say that the most effective narrative manipulation apparatus were books like the Bible and ideas like "we, the chosen people of God," which justified various political actions against other peoples, not to mention the Quran and the realization of the Muslim empire during the European Middle Ages. Later, the same Bible, and especially the monopoly of its interpretation by the Roman Empire first and then by European nations, justified the Crusades against Muslims and various massacres in Europe against other Christians and in other continents against pagans and idolaters, which served as moral support for the sword and cannon of the superior race.

In this last case, the hijacked technology was Gutenberg's movable type printing press, which began by democratizing culture and continued by legitimizing the militaristic barbarism of European colonizers. In fact, pocket books emerged as practical war manuals for the battlefields. The same goes for newspapers in the 19th century, radio and television in the 20th century, and especially the internet in the early 21st century.

In 1833, *The Sun* in New York began selling newspapers for a penny (a phenomenon known as the *penny press*), which made newspaper

production far exceed previous levels. By the mid-19th century, the rotary press was perfected, enabling the spread not only of fake news but also of foundational myths like the myth of Manifest Destiny. The self-congratulatory storm of fake but patriotic news, largely originating from the government itself, became an addiction impossible to stop. Various newspapers began baselessly accusing Mexicans of offending the honor of the United States, calling on all young men to enlist as volunteers to fight thousands of miles away from the taverns where they got drunk on cheap liquor and patriotic songs. Once the theft of more than half of Mexican territory was accomplished, accompanied by massacres and rapes, there was no shortage of artists promoted by the complicity of the next generation. The most iconic painting of the period was "American Progress" by artist John Gast, completed in 1872. A kitschy allegory depicting a blonde, sexy woman (white women never fully expose their breasts, like the fleeing Native woman, but suggest them delicately behind a tunic that never quite falls) floating in the air, representing civilization. In front of her, wild beasts, Native Americans, and darkness flee, while behind her follow light, agriculture, and technological progress, such as the railroad. In one hand, she carries a "*school book*" while in the other, she unrolls a telegraph wire.

By then, the latest invention was the telegraph. Samuel Morse had discovered this technique of transmitting signals in binary code in 1838 and, in 1844, had successfully transmitted the first message from Washington to Baltimore: "WHAT GOD HATH WROUGHT."[vii] By 1880, there were over a million kilometers of telegraph cables worldwide. Samuel Morse's brother, Sidney, wrote him a prophetic letter: "Your invention, measured by the power it will give man to carry out his plans, is not only the greatest invention of this age but the greatest invention of any age. I see... that the surface of the earth will be interconnected, and every wire will be a nerve, carrying to different parts of the world the knowledge of what each is doing. This invention is invaluable!"[11] Soon, Samuel Morse would be recognized as "The Peacemaker of His Time." In 1858, after completing the transatlantic cable between Washington and London, President James

[vii] That same year, in the United States, the fixed drum of rotary printing was patented. Around the same year, two other Samuels invented the six-shot drum, the *Colt Walker* revolver. In 1847, the captain of the Texas *rangers* Samuel Walker, after patenting, along with Samuel Colt, the most perfect killing tool, died from the shot of an obsolete shotgun fifty kilometers from Puebla, Mexico, where he had gone to defend his country from the Mexicans who did not want to cede more territory to the cause of slavery.

Buchanan confirmed the same optimism, never devoid of messianism: "May the Atlantic Telegraph, under the blessing of Heaven, prove to be a bond of perpetual peace and friendship between the kindred nations, and an instrument designed by Divine Providence to diffuse religion, civilization, liberty, and law throughout the world."[12] To avoid disappointing expectations, the telegraph soon became another tool for new wars.

But the maturation of the power of the press would come with the hijacking of the Cuban War of Independence and the Spanish-American War in 1898, alongside the invention of yellow journalism. Three years earlier, on February 17, 1895, from the New York World Building, the tallest building in the city, Joseph Pulitzer had flooded the streets with a million copies of the New York World featuring a comic strip about a character named Mickey Dugan. On May 5, the homeless, barefoot, drunk, and foul-mouthed boy appeared dressed in a yellow tunic in the first full-color comic strip the world had ever seen. What was new was that the old was now represented in a mass medium. At the time, foul-mouthed and drunk children were not uncommon. Boys became men with whiskey at home, and men became brave with more whiskey in taverns. Soon, the lying boy would move, likely for money, to William Randolph Hearst's New York Journal. As quantum physics proves, for a time, the character continued to exist simultaneously in his old home and the new one.

But the *New York World* and the *New York Journal* also dedicated more serious pages to politics and the coming war. The competition between the two was a fight to the death, so they had to resort to sensationalism and the fabrication of facts that inflamed primitive emotions like anger and patriotism. The *New York Press*, a modest newspaper in the city, dismissively labeled the persuasive work of the two major newspapers in the country as "yellow journalism."

When the illustrator Frederic Remington asked William Randolph Hearst to return home due to a lack of news ("there is no war here," he had reported), Hearst ordered him to stay: "you furnish the pictures, and I'll furnish the war."[13] *Fake news*, big private businesses, and wars have always been intertwined. The enemies, Pulitzer (the future paradigm of ethical journalism) and Hearst (the future media mogul pro-Hitler), were businessmen and knew that nothing sold better than war, misinformation, and the exacerbation of tavern patriotism. By early 1898, the New York Journal had sold an impressive 30,000 copies per day. By the time the war against Spain broke out, which wasn't really a war, the Journal was selling

over a million copies a day. By then, it could reduce the price of the newspaper by half (one cent) in an effort to attract "less sophisticated" readers. Among the favorite stories that would later be reproduced in hundreds of other local newspapers across the country, the most appealing were those that depicted the Spanish as barbaric criminals, depraved men pursuing defenseless, nearly naked Cuban women. This war wasn't the first war in which the media justified the ends, but it was the first in history encouraged by the media in pursuit of increasing their sales. The absurdity reached such proportions that other minor newspapers, like the St. Paul Globe in Minnesota, began advertising themselves as "The latest news. Reliable. No fake War News."14

When the telephone replaced the telegraph, as it had to, history repeated itself. In 1876, Alexander Graham Bell got President Rutherford Hayes to accept the first telephone in the White House with the number 1, the national code for the United States today. Bell's company became AT&T. An extension of this form of voice transmission was Marconi's radio, which began with wireless communication and continued with the broadcast of the same wave to more than one receiver. According to Marconi, radio was going to be "a herald of peace and civilization among nations."[15] Marconi himself sold it as a tool of communication and propaganda to the British for their colonial wars and to the Belgians for their brutal capitalist exploitation of the Congo (which, under the supervision of King Leopold II alone, left ten million dead), and to the Russians and Japanese so they could fight each other.[16]

In 1906, the first radio program was broadcast in the United States. Soon, political speeches were reduced from one hour to ten minutes. The American politician who best knew how to use the new medium was Franklin D. Roosevelt. In Germany, it was the Nazis. Hitler not only drew inspiration from the racist tradition of slaveholders and theorists like Madison Grant, but his propaganda minister learned from the books of Edward Bernays. Hitler had no doubts and didn't beat around the bush: "When a war is unleashed, what matters is not being right, but achieving victory."

Bernays systematized propaganda just as his uncle, Sigmund Freud, had systematized psychoanalysis. His theories and successful practices not only inspired the Nazi propagandists of the Third Reich but also served to sell one of the biggest *fake news* stories of the 20th century: the idea that the democratically elected president of Guatemala was a

communist, which the CIA used to protect one of its favorite companies. They succeeded not only by replacing Árbenz in 1954 with a military coup (similar to the one in Iran in 1953) but also by producing a series of military dictatorships that, over the next forty years, left more than 200,000 dead in that small country alone. All, as always, in the name of democracy and freedom.

More recently, during the war in Ukraine, Western media and governments accused Russian media of being part of the Russian government's propaganda. Direct censorship, as in China or Saudi Arabia, is not the business of Western media or megacapitalists, who always justify their abuses of power with the argument that they are the defenders of freedom. Although history shows that the defenders of "free enterprise" have almost always supported dictatorships or unpopular policies, for linguistic reasons they cannot be against "freedom" in the abstract while defending the freedom that truly matters to them. Who could be against freedom in the centuries of the Enlightenment paradigm? If we convince the majority of those at the bottom that when we speak of freedom, we are not referring only to *our* freedom, the business is a done deal. No different from the American slaveholders who invented the Republic of Texas in 1836 to reinstate slavery in that Mexican territory and then continued expanding slavery westward, always under the narrative of freedom. Just as when the slaveholders spoke of "freedom," they meant the freedom of "the free race" (a detail lost in the translation of their speeches into primary and secondary school textbooks, films, and mainstream media), the hijackers of democracy after the Civil War in the United States, that is, the big businessmen and corporations, began to refer to "freedom of enterprise," which led to the establishment of dozens of dictatorships in Latin America from the late 19th century to protect it, first from the Indians, the Blacks, and the poor, and then from the witch of communism, which they themselves created twice, first as a popular reaction and then as an illusion designed in the CIA offices in Virginia.

Western censorship has always focused on true propaganda, that is, the inoculated idea that leads a significant majority to think and act according to the interests of an elite to which they do not belong, nor do their own interests. The great explosion of this strategy occurred with the independence of the Thirteen Colonies, promoted by an elite of enlightened philosophers who fought against a monarch across the ocean but also did not want to fully implement their own ideals, such as "*We the People*"

and "all men are created equal." Similarly, as we exposed in *The Savage Frontier* (2021), the obsession with union arose from the fear of territorial fragmentation and the social and racial fragmentation on which the entire idealistic discourse of the Founding Fathers was based. A central part of all propaganda is not only convincing a group of people to do something they would not do on their own but, in the long term, convincing them to think in a certain way until they become its main defenders. For this, the colonization of language is of central importance.[17]

One of the mechanisms by which this semantic colonization is carried out consists of the fossilization of a narrative in unconditional support of a dominant dogma. It is much easier and more immediate to inoculate a dogma into a social group (like a mosquito inoculating a parasite into another animal) than to remove it from the collective unconscious. For example, during the early years of the Cold War, the power of Latin American communists and the possibilities of Soviet interference on the continent were virtually irrelevant. Washington and the CIA knew this. Nevertheless, the Agency planned the narrative of "the fight against communism" and, not without irony, "against foreign influence" to destroy democracies and plant puppets in friendly dictatorships, just as it planted articles in the mainstream press. Once the CIA acknowledged that it had been a fabrication, the believers who had little or nothing to gain from this dogma continued to be its greatest defenders and passed it on to the next generations. Something similar happened with the more recent invasion of Iraq. Once Presidents George W. Bush and José María Aznar acknowledged "the intelligence error" regarding the existence of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of Saddam Hussein, apart from his alleged links to Al Qaeda, the majority of American consumers of the conservative network Fox News continued to assert that the existence of the prohibited weapons was real.[viii]

Just as Franklin D. Roosevelt won four presidential elections thanks to his mastery of the radio, John F. Kennedy won the 1960 election against Nixon thanks to his better mastery of television, and Barack Obama did so in 2008 through his mastery of the internet, and Donald Trump in 2016 through his mastery of social media.

[viii] In April 2022, former President George W. Bush added a new confession, one of his many Freudian slips: he admitted that the Iraq War was "*completely unjustified; a brutal invasion*" (The Guardian. "George W Bush accidentally admits Iraq war was 'unjustified and brutal' in gaffe". May 19, 2022.)

The birth and development of the internet were no different from all the communication media that preceded it: communication tools and military instruments, means of deliberation and oppression. Media hijacked by the powers that be.

During the war in Ukraine, those of us who held NATO responsible for the military escalation that led to the Russian invasion were immediately accused of being "pro-Putin," even though we directly and explicitly denied it multiple times. Newspapers like *Le Monde* in Paris echoed this form of moral censorship, diverting the focus of criticism away from the root causes.[18] Almost unanimously, the large and respected networks of Western governments, such as DW, PBS, and BBC, along with numerous private corporations, presented only one viewpoint: that of the Ukrainian victims. This viewpoint was based on an irrefutable moral fact (innocent victims are innocent victims), but, like all claims of objectivity, it consisted of a selective representation of reality to conveniently distort it. Perspectives contrary to NATO's interests were conspicuously absent.

When the congresses of certain countries have questioned megaplatforms like Twitter or Facebook for allowing hate speech or failing to control the massive production of *fake news*, their owners have always defended themselves by claiming that they are not "the arbiters of truth." Once again, the Anglo-Saxon mask covers and distracts from reality. To mention just one recent conflict, let's recall that platforms like Twitter accompanied every link to RT with the warning, "This tweet is related to a site dependent on the Russian government." Of course, in all other cases, they do not label or mention the affiliations of Western media with aligned governments. Major opinion-forming networks, such as Fox News or CNN, responsible for supporting massive wars and *concealing their crimes against humanity*, are not more independent because they are private; on the contrary, their empires do not depend on readers but on their million-dollar advertisers and the powerful interests of their micro social class. Their news should be preceded with the warning: "*this media outlet is affiliated with or serves the special interests of lobbies, corporations, and transnational entities*."

To a large extent, channels that do not hide their affiliation with a government, a union, or an ideology are more honest than those with international reach and devastating influence that pose as independent and champions of journalistic objectivity.

Moreover, media objectivity does not exist, and neutrality is mere cowardice, if not cynicism. What exists and should be valued is honesty, finally acknowledging which worldview we support and whether that worldview depends on our personal interests, class interests, or something broader called humanity.

The war in Cuba in 1898 (print media), the destruction of Guatemalan democracy in 1954, the failed invasion of Cuba in 1961 (radio), the destruction of Chilean democracy in 1973 (print, radio, and television), and so many others, were direct products of PR manipulations (*Press release)* and media used as propaganda tools were complex operations but much simpler than the reality we face today. The internet has increased the diversity, reach, and complexity of the same manipulation of public opinion. With the internet and social media, the *participation* of the reader has increased *the idea* of consumer freedom and independence.

The central reason for the manipulation of public opinion (of its emotions and feelings) must be sought in the empire of corporate powers. All political and social campaigns require money. The more money, the more media power. The fact that today a handful of men in the United States possess as much wealth as half the country's population is not a minor detail. That wealth depends on and grows with investments, and one of the most important investments, on which their very existence and the world order depend, lies in investments in public opinion. For example, by attributing their own practices to their adversaries: the danger lies in the propaganda of socialists, unions, etc.

Artificial intelligence will exacerbate this situation.

8. Give me an enemy, and I'll make you my vassal

ON THE OTHER HAND, IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE that we retain cultural and even genetic remnants of all that history, just as we retain the allergies of the Neanderthals, who were disappeared or eliminated by our ancestors 40,000 years ago.[19] I am referring to the need to *relate to an enemy*. Even more than the tribal feeling of *belonging to a group*, tribal paranoia requires an enemy. This is the constitutional reason behind every flag, every array of symbols, whether they are *stickers* on cars or tattoos on arms and the

back of the neck. Otherwise, if someone feels part of a confederated group, why would they need to wave their flag at us on a street in Jacksonville or Philadelphia? The same reflection applies to any other fanatic of racial or nationalist sects on any other continent, a fanaticism that those in power know and exploit very well, whether in personal dictatorships or in the dictatorships of hijacked democracies.

I believe it is not far-fetched to think that the evolutionary adaptation to protect the tribe has left the legacy of a permanent predisposition to antagonism, to the combat of some other. The problem is that this "tribal legacy," now expressed in fascism, Nazism, racism, and all their variations, has the same effect as our antibodies in a hyper-hygienic world: the antibodies begin to recognize our own body as the invading enemy and attack it, producing all kinds of serious illnesses that end up killing us.

The "need for an enemy" or for "an antagonist" permeates almost all social interactions in today's digital world. Consequently, it is exploited and maximized by corporations whose goal is economic profit, "free competition" (on a large scale, read "the elimination of competition").[20]

This operates at the popular level, that is, in basic, primitive, reptilian emotions. But the same logic works and dominates at the higher levels of society and power, where it truly has a concrete benefit.

"*The enemy never rests… Your mission is ours*." Thus, and on the front page, Lockheed Martin, a private company that sells war weaponry (always referencing the "right to defense" and "national security") advertises in the *New York Times*, in case there is any other buyer besides the government. 50,000,000,000 dollars in search of new enemies. On December 31, 2021, the *Wall Street Journal* published an extensive analysis. The title alone begins with a question and ends with the answer: "*Who Won in Afghanistan? Private Contractors*. The U.S. military spent 14 trillion dollars (*$14 trillions*) over two decades of war; those who benefited range from major manufacturers to entrepreneurs." After the new military fiasco in Afghanistan, and after such a fortune invested by Washington in war companies, in the merchants of death, it is urgent to find a new enemy and a new conflict. Before a major adventure with China, the option is clear: continue violating the treaties of non-armament expansion of NATO to the East, pressure Russia to react by deploying its army on the border with Ukraine, and then accuse it of attempting to invade the neighboring

country. Hasn't this been exactly the story of the treaties signed with Native Americans since the late 18th century?

As Edward Snowden reveals in his book *Permanent Record*, based on the NSA documents he himself leaked, the "Black Budget" of 2013 consisted of 52.6 billion solely for the Intelligence Community composed of 107,035 employees (of which 21,800 were outsourced contracts). According to Snowden himself, "*most of the intelligence work has been privatized*."[21] Something that journalist Ross Gelbspan had already warned about in 1991 as a process initiated by Ronald Reagan while promoting any conservative group to Intelligence offices.[22]

9. The Leader

THE LEADER IS THE DEPOSITORY of what in economics is known as "rational ignorance": we cannot investigate or know everything, so we make uninformed decisions knowing that the benefits of more information are less than the costs of an uninformed decision. For this, we must delegate our decision-making power to someone who knows something about the subject. The problem is that in major social issues, the costs of an uninformed decision always exceed the costs of a greater effort of investigation.

In politics, in the formation of public or collective opinion, individuals often delegate their decision-making power to a leader. In religions, this functions as a repository for all possible errors: if we don't know what's best, let's do as the leader or prophet says, who is never wrong. After all, they are either God or a messenger of God.

In politics, it's no different. Leaving our decision-making power in the hands of a Leader X relieves us of moral and intellectual effort, but the price is supporting and defending them, helping the leader to help us, regardless of whether they or we are wrong.

When in 1971 inflation in the United States approached seven percent, President Richard Nixon decided to go against the conservative-mercantilist dogma of his own party and its loyal voters and imposed price controls. Gallup polls and surveys from Columbia University in New York showed that the announcement of price controls had no impact on Democratic Party voters, who had long been in favor of such measures, but

among Republican followers, support for price controls rose from 37 percent to 82 percent in just a few hours.

This constitutional weakness is distilled in fairy tales, where the poor peasant, the humble artisan dreams of one day reaching—or imagining every day—the blessing of royalty. Cinderella who finally marries the prince, the office worker who reads magazines about the Rich and Famous. In recent centuries, this has been exploited by political realism, by U.S. governments like that of Ronald Reagan, and by almost all the puppets planted by Washington and private transnational corporations in the Republics south of the Rio Grande since the 19th century.

10. We are exceptional, the chosen people

NO ONE CAN LOVE AN ABSTRACT and largely fictional entity like "the homeland" or any country in the same way they love a person or a specific group of people, like family or friends. We may like a place, our own home, but there's a difference between that and feeling love. Love for a country is a fabrication, a cultural and ideological product, and a narcissistic sublimation that, as Bernard Shaw said, "*patriotism is the conviction that this country is superior to all others because you were born there*." This paradox is even clearer in the sudden patriotism of immigrants who were not "born there," who, upon arriving in a global superpower, wrap themselves in its flag, all in the name of "love for this great country" and similar rationalizations that assume that martyrs for human rights and their assassins have something in common that unites them and must be loved and defended with the patriot's life. It's not love-love. It's self-love. Patriotism is the reflection of self-love in the mirror of altruism.

Long before countries existed with their flags (some taken from a religious sect and others, like that of the United States, from a private English company), as we conceive them now and for not many centuries, from before the Sumerians and Egyptians to the Bible and the various nations that followed (Romans, Pygmies, English), each tribe, each people considered themselves "the true men," "the people chosen by the gods"—by their god or gods, it goes without saying—"the evolved race," "the civilized people," or "the correct culture." In all cases, it was an arbitrary and merely

arrogant declaration of superiority and special rights of one people over others. If for some material reason that people, nation, or country managed to subjugate others and impose their own fantasies, the belief of having been favored or chosen by their gods proved itself, and those who questioned it were not only associated with the losers but with evil—the devil, the dangerous ideology, the enemy.

It's unnecessary to clarify which American nation has played this role in the last two centuries. After gaining independence from Britain to break the European empire's agreement with Indigenous nations and thus cross the Appalachians to exercise their "right of exploration" and take by gunpoint the lands of the savages who "were too selfish and didn't want to share them with the whites," the Anglo-Saxon settlers dedicated themselves to repelling the defenses of the dispossessed and calling *attack* the Indigenous defense and *defense* their own attacks.[23] After President Andrew Jackson, known by the nickname "Indian Killer," signed the last law for the Removal of Native peoples, on December 4, 1832, he addressed Congress and reported: "*The Indians* were completely defeated, and the band of discontent was expelled or destroyed… Although we had to act harshly, it was necessary; they attacked us without provocation, and we hope they have learned a healthy lesson forever."24

This psycho-cultural pattern would repeat itself countless times for at least two centuries: (1) we intervene, invade, take, and subjugate, legitimized by *our* laws; for ourselves and for the world, we repeat: (2) "we were attacked without provocation"; (3) "we had to defend ourselves"; (4) "we will never forget." Later, the self-victimization due to the misunderstanding of inferior races, peoples, and cultures found its echo in the flattering poem by the Englishman Rudyard Kipling, which went viral in 1899 during the U.S. invasion of the Philippines: "*The White Man's Burden*."

The idea of an exceptional nation (blacks and other inferior races were not part of that nation) matured and articulated its ideology in the myth of Manifest Destiny, invented by journalist John O'Sullivan in 1845. Not coincidentally, this new narrative emerged shortly before President James Polk fabricated, out of thin air, a war against Mexico, based on a supposed offense and following a forced "they attacked us first," with the goal of taking all Mexican territory stretching to California and thus bringing "the blessing of slavery to the rest of the world." To the north, it had not been possible. In Canada, they had been defeated in their previous attempt to obtain the Fourteenth State, and even Britain had responded

by burning Washington in 1812, which was later sold to historians as an unjustified aggression, supported by enslaved blacks who were cast into the verses of the National Anthem as unpatriotic traitors. To the South and West were the inferior races. O'Sullivan himself wrote in 1852 that "*this continent and its adjacent islands belong to the whites; the blacks* must remain slaves..."25

According to the new dogma of Manifest Destiny, God had commanded the superior race to expand westward. For this, they needed to invent more advanced war machines, like the Colt-Walker revolver.[ix] This cult of American exceptionalism was simultaneously confirmed in one of its still-dominant cultural traits: its anti-intellectualism. Especially after the "Founding Fathers," the generation of enlightened intellectuals, had already died, and in 1829, a military man with minimal education and maximum fanaticism, named Andrew Jackson, refounded the country in the cult of the power of arms and the "conquest of the frontier" by the superior race, lovers of freedom.

This imprint of Protestant violence, divine wrath, the gun-loving and capital-thirsty Jesus at any cost, would have multiple translations, but all very similar. In 1897, shortly after being appointed Assistant Secretary of the Navy by President McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt wrote to a friend: "I am in favor of almost any war, and I believe this country needs one."26 Roosevelt was another aristocrat who never overcame the trauma of his parents paying another young man to go to the Civil War in his place. During his years at Harvard, he took up boxing, but it wasn't enough to calm his white male complexes. Before reaching the White House as president, he often posed dressed as Daniel Boone in New York studios and repeated, every other day, that those who did not dare to go to war in distant lands were not men and did not honor the Teutonic race. Reluctantly, President William McKinley sent the USS Maine to Havana to silence the voices that doubted his masculinity for not wanting to start another war. A decision that, although not the original intention of the president, would end up provoking the war against Spain that the new yellow press of Pulitzer and Hearst desperately desired. War and power are addictive.

[ix] In reality, neither Samuel Colt nor Samuel Walker invented the revolver, but they patented it in 1836. Walker died in 1847, the same year his dream of commercializing a super-powerful revolver became a reality with the invention and trademark Colt-Walker. Someone, probably a woman, shot him from a balcony in Mexico, with an obsolete shotgun, as a way to avenge the massacres and rapes of the invaders chosen by God in the War of Dispossession.

Finally, McKinley would acknowledge in 1898: "We need Hawaii as we need California; it is Manifest Destiny." Shortly after, McKinley received a visit from God, asking him to also save the Philippines with another invasion, which would not only leave 200,000 dead, the invention of the sport of hunting blacks, and new forms of torture, like the submarine, but also an interesting access to the markets of the always-desired China. On June 17, 1902, soldier Robert E. Austill wrote to his friend Herbert Welsh: "Our compatriots in America are asking us to kill all the men here and rape the women to improve the race on these islands." This was not an exception but a repetition found in dozens of similar letters from his comrades. In 1914, the progressive President Woodrow Wilson, after intervening in the Caribbean and Central America, declared: "I am going to teach the South Americans to elect decent governments." This was almost a copy of the future words of Henry Kissinger on September 12, 1971, when the CIA failed to make Salvador Allende lose the election, as it had in previous opportunities, and he stated: "I don't see why we should stand by and watch a country go communist due to the irresponsibility of its own people." The CIA director, Richard Helms, responded with the solution: "A sudden economic disaster will be the logical pretext to justify military action."27

Throughout the 20th century, and before the medieval return of the 21st century along the same path of capitalism, the superheroes of American pop culture, the products of the cultural industry and commerce, expressed and reproduced this primitive impulse, highly effective and, not by mere coincidence, easily consumable. All the classic heroes (all white men with a hidden frustration) like the Lone Ranger, Superman, Batman, Captain America, or the Hulk possess a dual personality, that is, what they are and what people believe they are. In no case are they distinguished by their intelligence, which is a radical reversal of the positivist and scientistic literature of the previous century, represented by detectives like Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes in England or Edgar Allan Poe in the United States. In fact, the superheroes are often quite foolish and naive, that is, very different from their original and manipulated origin in Zorro, who, aside from not being an Anglo-Saxon hero, operates from the margins, not from the center like all his successors.[x] Like Moses,

[x] Superman was born in the 1930s, that is, during the Great Depression, as a champion of the working class against the plunder of the millionaires, but this perspective is quickly

none of them have a father or mother but stepfathers or substitutes. But in the commercial superhero, not only has the father disappeared but also God. The superpowers of religious leaders that once derived from God have now passed, in a moment of maximum abstraction, to the material and mechanical superpowers of the masked hero (the hero with two faces, the dual personality). He is the extreme representative of the alienated individual, without spirit and almost without intelligence, in the same way that, although religions insist that their gods are the maximum intelligence, creators of the Universe, they never demonstrate it: miracles are expressions of power, not rational demonstrations of a phenomenon. Like any father, he does not need and should not give too many explanations to his young children about the reasons for his decisions. It is the authority and power that is exercised and protected by avoiding any dialectical exposure, any hint of questioning.

Imperial governments and their angels, the secret agencies like the CIA, were the real expression of these secular superheroes, demigods of material power capable of seeing everything, hearing everything, intimidating, imposing their narratives, and disposing of the lives of millions of people, deciding on the death of their infidels ("who want to take over the world") above any human justice. Demigods, superheroes with special powers: the power of capital and technology, inaccessible to the rest of mortals.

In Anglo-Saxon culture, and especially in Anglo-American culture, problems are solved by force. But since muscular strength is never exceptional in any race, except for exceptions like Hercules or Samson, and despite the exceptionalism of a race considered superior, the *special powers* of the superhero were necessary, fantastic sublimations of weapons. The cult of weapons was born during slavery (just as the police emerged from slave militias) and was consolidated with each dispossession of peoples "on the frontier," that is, the rest of the world: Indians, Mexicans, Latin Americans, Filipinos, Africans, Asians…

The confession of Theodore Roosevelt in 1897 ("*I am in favor of almost any war, and I believe this country needs one*") was neither new nor the last of its kind. To mention just one more example, it would suffice to

---

demonized by the owners of the major press and the cultural industry, like William R. Hearst, with his pro-Nazi and anti-communist campaign, which is why Superman quickly moves to the center and begins to fight against the "bandits" on the margins, those who "want to take over the world"—a world that already has an owner.

recall the words of then-Senator, later President, and responsible for the atomic bombs on Japan and other even worse wars in the region, Harry Truman. "*If we see that Germany is winning the war, we should help Russia; and if it is Russia that is winning, we should help Germany; in that way, we will let them kill each other as much as possible*," Truman affirmed, with the conviction of leaders, in 1941.[28]

11. Ancestral Pornography, Intellectual Obesity

ASIDE FROM THE BIG NEWS of the "external threat," the other element of survival always came from within. That is, the conflict of possession and control. Probably one of the most important centers of conflict within the group was sex. This is why any deviation from rigid norms like exogamy or monogamy was always a powerful magnet for public attention and, therefore, a valuable product for capitalist media. In some cultures more than others. Especially in more repressive cultures like the Protestant one.

On May 22, 2022, the world's richest man, African American Elon Musk, lost $10,000,000,000 (ten billion) dollars, that is, the entire economy of Haiti in a single day, due to the suspicion of an inappropriate sexual incident. According to various sources, a flight attendant at SpaceX had received $250,000 to refrain from revealing that Mr. Musk had proposed having sex with her. For the same reason, the powerful director of the IMF, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, had to resign from his position and his aspirations for the presidency of France when, in 2011, he touched the buttocks of a maid at an American hotel. In other words, the fate of millions of people decided in a bedroom (in a first-class airplane seat, in a hotel bed) as in the Middle Ages.

The obsession with sex and the repression of all things sexual is characteristic of Protestant-Anglo-Saxon culture, which is why a president can launch a bloody war without congressional authorization (and without UN approval, although this is a symbolic detail), as George W. Bush did, but cannot have an extramarital affair, as his predecessor, Bill Clinton, did. War is something that happens far from the village. Sex, even if it occurs thousands of kilometers away, has something to do with us, with

the tribe. The history of the United States is full of similar examples, but let's briefly look at the case of President Clinton.

Just as in 2016 one of the most corrupt congresses in Brasília impeached the president of Brazil, Dilma Rousseff, on unproven corruption charges (or, in any case, quite minor ones), in February 1999 the U.S. Congress sought to remove President Clinton for sexual sins of which many of its members were just a stone's throw away from throwing a stone at the adulterer. But Clinton's defenders were more cunning than Rousseff's.

In 1999, the U.S. House of Representatives approved the *impeachment* process of President Clinton for his sexual scandal with intern Monica Lewinsky. The decision and certain removal of the president went to the Senate, dominated by the Republican Party. For this, two-thirds of the votes were needed, a number assured by the manifest intentions of the senators who wanted to see the president exiting through the back door of history.

With nothing left to lose, the president's defense hired Larry Flynt, the mogul of global pornography, owner of magazines and producer of adult films. Almost immediately, Flynt paid for a full-page ad in the *Washington Post* offering a million dollars to those who could prove similar stories to the president's, involving members of Congress. Thousands of calls and recordings came in immediately. Flynt didn't even bother to listen to them.

Fearful of public scandals, some legislators began confessing infidelities to their wives. The most important voice in favor of *impeachment*, the Speaker of the House and representative of the ultra-conservative state of Louisiana, Bob Livingston, mysteriously resigned on the same day the vote was to take place. Since then and to this day, Bobby has been dedicated to lobbying in Washington (that is, visiting legislators in their offices and inviting them to parties to talk business). Suddenly, the condemning majority in the upper house became a minority. Ten Republican senators voted in favor of pardoning the Democratic president. From the obligation to stone the adulterer, legislated in the Old Testament, it shifted, in a few days, to the love of the New Testament: "Go, son, and sin no more." The president was pardoned.

But it is likely that this excessive obsession with sex and, above all, with the sexual stories of others, has an even deeper ancestral root than the repressive Anglo-Saxon culture itself. It may be a component developed

over many thousands of years of evolution, something that social networks and the rest of social power exploit without realizing it.

The Oxford Internet Institute conducted a study on 22 million tweets and concluded that, during the analyzed period, users had shared more false and conspiratorial information than true information. The researchers labeled these news items as *junk news* ("junk news").[29] Singer and Brooking took up this metaphor and summarized these observations as follows: "just as junk food lacks nutritional value, these stories lack informational value. Like junk food, they have been made with artificial ingredients and overly sweetened to make them tempting." At the end of 2009, sociologist Danah Boyd gave a lecture in New York titled "Streams of Content, Limited Attention" in which, prophetically, she observed: "*Our bodies are programmed to consume fats and sugars because they are rare in nature. Similarly, we are biologically programmed to pay attention to stimulating content such as information that is brutal, violent, humiliating, shameful, and offensive. If we are not careful, we will develop the psychological equivalent of obesity. At some point, we will find ourselves consuming content that is harmful to us as individuals and to the rest of society*."[30]

On the other hand, there is also a need to believe in a reality that one desires, regardless of whether it is real or not. In other words, there is a deep need to lie to oneself to deny a painful reality, especially when it has not yet manifested itself clearly. This psychological mechanism of denial is common in cases of complicated or terminal illnesses. Not only the patient and their family members but the entire medical structure invests enormous resources with the sole goal of keeping hope for recovery alive. The same, we can speculate, occurs in social psychology.

The combination of two ancestral impulses, (1) the threat of the other, of the other tribe, and (2) the ancestral tendency to consume news that breaks the routine, initially for evolutionary survival reasons, was turned into a product by capitalism through one of its main instruments: the media.

Social networks only reinvented this traditional obsession with sex and the dirty, taken to the extreme by puritan culture, for example, through "*shitposts* (shitposts)," that is, extremely negative and offensive memes.[xi]

[xi] It is interesting to note through a simple Ngram analysis how, as verbal expressions have lost sophistication, at the same time insults and expressions of frustration like "*fuck*" and

12. The Ping-pong Culture

ANOTHER CONSTITUTIONAL WEAKNESS, ancestral and probably universal, is the *ego*. For a long time, it could be expressed in (1) physical disputes, which later translated into medieval jousting and, later, into football or any other sports-tribal fanaticism in the 20th century, and (2) dialectical disputes, the battle between two egos that need to be right about anything they assert and uphold in political or nationalist tribalism. Perhaps the first ancestral weakness better represents the subjects, and the second the masters, although in matters of power they have nothing of masters or leaders but in their mere psychological constitution. Few, if any, can resist criticism from someone, for example, on a social network like Twitter or Facebook. Even when it comes to friends, mere acquaintances, followers, or any individual who has been on good terms with the offended party due to a trivial opinion. The dialectical dispute usually ends in insults and one of the worst enmities that any civilized person can imagine. This love-hate mechanism is amplified, like alcohol, by the *media distance* that turns our "virtual friends" into tribal enemies.

The virtual distance of digital media easily turns "one of us" into "one of them." The other, even if they continue to belong to the same ideological bubble, is always an "imperfect us," an almost-other who, at the slightest dialectical or ideological difference, automatically becomes an absolute enemy. The only reason lies in the sensitivity of the wounded *ego*, that is, the complex of the ancient tribal leader who has been questioned by the words of a *beta male*, a candidate for alpha male.

Now, the complexity of this ancestral nature is complicated a thousandfold because in the political or ideological battle (the battle for power), a fundamental argument is never truly lost or won, as it is at this frontier where politics and religion overlap. Factual discussions can only be limited to very precise and narrow data (inflation, crime rates, or inequality), none of which could affect the partisan faith of those involved. Suppose we are in a meeting, and suddenly someone presents factual data

---

"*shit*" have exponentially increased in usage in English-speaking societies since 1960. Something similar can be observed in other languages, such as Spanish.

that goes against the proposals of a political party, whether in government or in opposition. No one would change their allegiance, affiliation, or sympathy, just as no one would stop being Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, or atheist because someone appeared with the worst possible evidence against any of these beliefs. There is no discussion that could be of any value, even though humanity has invested centuries in this absurdity. This only proves one aspect of our human condition.

In this sense, no rational idea holds any value. It is a matter of emotions, and the stronger and more widespread the emotion (usually a negative one), the better for those in power. Being furious does not mean being right. At any other point in history, this would be a truism. Not in our time. A characteristic of the current social media culture is the "culture of argumentation." In Spanish, a "*discusión*" in a family context often has a negative connotation, implying a dispute or fight. In English, "*to have an argument*" (dispute or fight) is incorrectly translated as "to argue." On social media and beyond, the "culture of argumentation" is a mix of the two interpretations, though we wouldn't risk much by saying it's the empty game of a dialectical struggle. Something like a discursive *ping-pong*. Just causes are never lacking, and for this reason, it is impossible or very difficult to separate the wheat from the chaff. But it is useful to observe the fundamental characteristic of the new culture to understand where we stand in the mire.

It is very likely that, due to our evolutionary adaptation over at least the last hundred thousand years, it is impossible to completely eradicate our propensity for conflict. Those who don't have problems create them. This is a reason to think that even if, in the future, humanity no longer needs to work to survive due to automated technology and a universal income (assuming we don't destroy the planet first), individuals and societies will always need a certain level of conflict, a struggle against an adversary or a problem. Otherwise, what happens at the cellular level to antibodies might occur: in an excessively hygienic environment, they don't stop their fight and, instead of combating infections, they turn to attacking our own bodies, as is the case with allergies, some forms of arthritis, and other contemporary issues. The same can be predicted when we analyze the future of societies.

But there can always be an option B. In this case, it would be the redirection of conflictive and combative energies toward just causes. Instead of fighting others over the color of their skin, their language, their

sexuality, their economic status, or their lifestyle preferences, we could channel these energies into more creative struggles, such as the fight for social justice, artistic creativity, and scientific innovation. After all, what is the passion for soccer if not the sublimation of hunting and war? This controlled sublimation on the playing field often spills over into the stands in a much more primitive expression of violence. To illustrate this, one need only consider the brawls in some Buenos Aires stadiums or the vandalistic fury of hooligans in Europe. Of course, this possible solution is, for now, a utopia. The irrational reaction is a return to prehistoric, tribal instincts, masked with high technology. To make matters worse, the media and the market exploit these ancestral impulses, just as fast-food chains *and soda companies* have become multibillion-dollar corporations by exploiting a biological condition that dates back to prehistory: the overvaluation of fat and sugar.

Shortly before the 2016 presidential elections, a Twitter account associated with white supremacists claimed that the New York City Police Department had uncovered a pedophilia network linked to members of the Democratic Party. This rumor grew when, in November, WikiLeaks published emails from John Podesta, Hillary Clinton's campaign manager, which were interpreted through twisted religious lenses. An anonymous user on the *4chan* network claimed that the phrase "*cheese pizza*" (pizza with mozzarella) was a reference to "c. p.," meaning "*child pornography*." The same emails revealed that John Podesta had corresponded with the owner of Comet Pizza, James Alefantis, a chef who owns two restaurants and an art gallery in Washington DC, is affiliated with the Democratic Party, and identifies as gay.[31] These kinds of hermetic codes, more typical of the Middle Ages, are common among the social media platforms frequented by the "alt-right" (the post-Tea Party far-right), according to which a hot dog or frankfurter means *boy*, "cheese" *girl*, "ice cream" *prostitute*, and "nut," apparently, *black person*. All of this, as is tradition in the repressed, sectarian, and religious far-right, is overflowing with sexual content and fixations.[xii]

According to the fevered imagination of these internet crusaders, the place where these criminal acts against minors were carried out,

[xii] The delirium of "*overinterpretations*," as Umberto Eco would say, continued with the analysis of stars and crescent moons in the restaurant's signage, which can be found in "satanic drawings" as well as in the Turkish flag, the American flag, or the flag of South Carolina. A heart-shaped logo from the St. Jude Children's Hospital that appeared on the business's

accompanied by satanic rituals, was a small pizzeria named Comet Ping Pong, located at 5037 Connecticut Avenue in Washington DC.

Days before the election, on October 19, in a rural town near Columbus, Ohio, candidate Donald Trump had declared in his speech, surrounded by cameras and microphones, that he would "totally accept" the election results "only if I win."[32] On Tuesday, November 8, he received nearly three million fewer votes (two percent of the total) than his opponent, Hillary Clinton. Nevertheless, due to the electoral system inherited from the era of slavery, Trump became president. However, he continued to insist for years that the election had been rigged because many illegal immigrants had voted for Clinton. Naturally, the same logic, but with more "stamina," was used to explain his defeat in 2020 against Democrat Joe Biden. Naturally, his followers *bought into* (an expression that originated in the United States and is now used even in Latin America) what they wanted to believe, culminating in the violent assault on the Capitol on January 6, 2021.

Donald Trump's victory on November 8, 2016, did not calm the spirits of his supporters. Quite the opposite. One example was Pizzagate, which occurred shortly after the election. On December 4, Edgar Maddison Welch, a resident of North Carolina, traveled to DC, entered the Devil's pizzeria, and fired his AR-15. Once he had created terror, he began searching for the basement where children were being abused (a kind of concrete bunker, as depicted in an Instagram image) but found only narrow storage rooms with cleaning supplies. According to Welch's statement to the police, his mission was to save children, though he didn't care that at that moment there were families with children enjoying a peaceful time. Although he claimed his intention was to conduct an investigation and raid the place on his own, and although his actions revealed or confirmed no suspicions, neither Welch nor the thousands of consumers of *4chan* and other digital cults stopped doubting the truth of his delusional reality.

All the allegations were debunked by the police department itself, but this did not calm the spirits of the white racists or make them change

website was considered a secret pedophilic symbol. Then a photograph of Obama playing "Ping Pong" with a child was added. Ping Pong → pizzeria → *Cheese Pizza* → *Child Pornography* → devilish rituals. Another of the "irrefutable proofs" was a photograph of the owner of another restaurant, L'Enfant Cafe-Bar, who appeared wearing a T-shirt that said "I ♥ L'ENFANT" (in French, "I love the child"). Half of Trump's voters believed that Hillary Clinton had participated in orgies with minors at this pizzeria.

their minds about what is true and what is fiction. On the contrary, anonymous chat platforms like *4chan* and various fake news outlets, such as *Your News Wire*, worked to normalize and confirm this false story.[xiii]

Consistent with the same tradition and like the covers of TIME, sexual scandals that could end the Universe must have concrete faces. For this reason, QAnon and other digital cults need stories like Pizzagate. In the United States, the consumption of child pornography is punishable by years in prison, but the imagination of pedophiles (from the letters of slaveholders who feared the end of their legal supremacy to pseudo-feminist women like Rebecca Latimer Felton) has at least two centuries of history and is not punished. It is rewarded and vindicated.

Today, the specialty of major media outlets, for professional reasons, is not usually fake news, as was the invention of the attack and sinking of the USS Maine in Havana in 1898 by the yellow press of New York, but rather the manipulation of real news. In the Age of social media, the direct creation of fake news has returned, with one key difference: its creators and promoters are not powerful media directors seeking to boost sales. Their primary motivation is their own fanaticism, meaning they are the first to convince themselves of a fiction before convincing others, much like the history of religious proselytism. The benefits accrue to other social levels, which at least raises the suspicion that, in addition to being a natural consequence of socio-economic degradation, it is also a natural outcome of a macroeconomic plan, such as neoliberalism. Without giving too much credit to the owners of the world's largest capitals and attributing to them a detailed intentionality in the current cultural catastrophe.

13. The Urgent News

ACCORDING TO ONE HISTORICAL ACCOUNT, in the year 490 BC, the Athenian athlete Pheidippides ran forty kilometers from Marathon to Athens to announce that the Persians of King Darius I had landed at Marathon. Another version mentions that the Athenians had sent him to Sparta to request help against the invasion. Along the way, the hero reportedly encountered the god Pan, who reproached the Athenians for their neglect

[xiii] In 2018, Your News Wire was renamed NewsPunch

due to their Olympic ego. In later versions, the impossible feat of Pheidippides is recounted, claiming he ran 230 kilometers in a single day from Sparta to Athens to announce the Greek army's victory in the battle, after which he died.

Assuming this event actually occurred, it is nonetheless embellished with the necessary components of any myth that withstands time. Beyond the classic divine rebuke of a people on the brink of catastrophe, beyond the predictable and necessary tragic element of the protagonist's death in fulfilling a moral mission, what endures is the importance of the news, whether in a real or imaginary community.

From prehistory to the present day, predictable and routine events lack impact both on the *attention* of individuals and communities as well as on their *memory*. The survival of individuals and the human species has always depended on extraordinary events such as natural disasters or the more frequent threats from other tribes and nations. In the face of a natural disaster (a hurricane, a volcano, or an earthquake), a people respond with humility for their own sins before the wrath of a god, but in the face of threats from other humans, they must respond with more intense emotions, such as outrage and the call to arms.

As Professor Joseph Campbell, author of the classic *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), might have said, the archetype of the story fits perfectly into many others. For example, that of the silversmith Paul Revere of Massachusetts, 1775, during the colonists' rebellion against the administrators of London. The silversmith and amateur dentist, like many other rebellious colonists, was in economic decline and suffering from the economic recession of the time. According to this foundational myth, Paul Revere rode through the night to warn of the arrival of British troops. The famous phrase "*The British are coming* (*The English are coming*)*!*", though repeated in schools, high schools, and the press, is another of the many American myths. At the time, all the whites in the colonies, including the modest silversmith, were considered *English*. English businessmen. English colonists. Englishmen in the land of savages… For centuries, the true enemies had been and continued to be the "Americans," a name then reserved for the indigenous people, the true enemies of the colonists and the primary reason for the American Revolution of 1775-1783. The myth presents and portrays Revere riding for hours on a horse he never owned to deliver the crucial treasure to his people: *the great news*.

The lesser versions of these stories are the countless gossips, the bearers of rumors, the announcers of important deaths, of scandalous infidelities. All of this is part of the genetic and psychological material of humanity (on *novelty* survival depends), but, at every moment, the powers that be have been able to capitalize on it in more elegant and powerful ways than the mere rumor from a neighbor gossiping about a woman who entered the mayor's house late at night or the troubled son of the town doctor who got the maid pregnant—who turned out to be a friend of a friend. Old stories of injustices, needless to say, but which have played petty roles independent of any real social struggle, of any human progress toward *less-pain*.

"*No news, good news* (No news is good news)" is one of the most popular sayings in English. That is, news is only news if it's bad. Beyond the cultural factor, this has a much more general root, likely embedded in the evolutionary biology of the human species and any other species. The orbitofrontal cortex and the anterior cingulate gyrus are the areas of the brain that carry the perception of the new toward consciousness. When a stimulus is repeated too much, this traffic is interrupted until the stimulus (for example, a background sound) disappears and becomes perceptible by its sudden absence.

Probably, medical research is among the few types of news with a somewhat positive profile that is published and consumed in the media (research on the current state of the environment is exactly the opposite). However, the very idea of *news* and science are incompatible. The resource of "a new scientific study shows that…" is heresy for any scientific community. "If you eat more avocados and drink less whiskey, you'll extend your life by 2.4 years." Etcetera. News needs to sell *novelty*, but no scientific study that is published aims to be the final word. In fact, it's common for it to be an advance subject to further testing by other scientists, to whom scientific publications are truly dedicated. That is, when it's not research funded by mafia-like corporations, such as big pharma.

The need for news and to pay attention to exceptional events, not routine ones, is at the root of our survival instinct. And the powers that be, in our case those at the top of the capitalist pyramid, exploit it like no

one else to their advantage. Not the gossipy neighbor, the rumor-monger, or the trafficker of scandals.

14. The Oracle

WE ARE MADE OF THE PAST. We inhabit the cities of the dead, and their ideas inhabit us. However, unlike the physical universe where its future (the trajectory of a comet, an eclipse) can be calculated with precision, the human universe cannot. The difficulty in predicting the human future lies in the unstable, non-deterministic variables, and these largely stem from the fact that our present is not explained solely by our past but also by our ideas about the future. As in quantum physics, the observer modifies the observed phenomenon. Once our analysis of the present changes, so does our vision of the future, and in turn, our present actions that will impact the future, and so on. We are sitting in a classroom because we've met years of prerequisites but, above all, because we have a life project.

The other constituent factor lies in the fact that we can see the past better than the future. The idea that the future is ahead and the past is behind is an imaginary construct that stems from the movement of the human body: we walk forward, rarely backward. The same when driving a car. If we add to that the fact that since the ancient Egyptians, the representation of time ceased to be circular and became a line on which we walk toward death, since then every great civilization has fossilized in language the idea of time as something that comes to us from ahead and goes behind. However, not all cultures and civilizations understood time in the same way. For those cultures more contemplative than obsessed with action, like the ancient Greeks or the Quechua or other American and Asian peoples, time was circular where everything repeated: what happened once will appear before us again. In other cases, it was like a flowing river. The observer could look downstream, that is, they could see the past, which naturally was ahead, while the future was something in process that came from behind and could only be guessed by its rumors without any precision.

Hence the anxiety about the future. In all religions, the future matters more than the past. The past condemns but does not determine. In the future lay pain, death, reward, or punishment beyond. One way to act upon it was through morality. The good are saved, the evil are condemned.

However, no human action was an absolute guarantee of a desired future. How to completely please the gods? How to win a war? How to achieve prosperity?

In the case of the ancient Greeks, this anxiety was directed toward the oracle. This is where the semantic shift of the idea of a prophet in the Christian tradition, as it passed through Greece, originates. In the Old Testament, prophets are not fortune-tellers but social critics, like Amos, who pointed out the social injustices and moral corruptions of their people. Today, the word *prophet* is more heavily loaded with its Greek meaning: the prophet is someone who can divine, see the future, and thus help people act upon the present. Typically, this type of prophet aligns with the myth of Cassandra, the goddess who could predict the future but (due to a curse from Apollo, the god of reason and truth) no one believed her.

In the secular world of humanism and the Enlightenment, the prophet became the philosopher of history. Particularly, the economists.

Today, economists, burdened by the deterministic world of the sciences and the material needs of business, presume that economics is a semi-hard science. Hence the many equations and graphs that never serve one of the central objectives of economics, which is to predict the future. They don't call it economic philosophy but Economic Sciences, yet, like the CIA avoiding supposed terrorist attacks, they never or almost never predict the major economic crises that their most prominent professionals create. The case of economist Nouriel Roubini is often mentioned, as he was one of the few economists capable of predicting the 2008 crisis in the United States, while the rest of the experts in the field insisted on the solidity of the economic fundamentals. This is like saying someone won the lottery because they played a number they dreamed of the night before, and they call that coincidence a premonition and attribute it to an intervention from beyond. The proof is that the same Roubini predicted another catastrophe for 2012, and it never came.

The same Roubini, at the peak of his fame as a prophet, described his prediction method as a holistic perception, free of mathematical formulas, more like someone who "uses their nose," he said, to evaluate "a big enchilada" made of history, literature, and economic variables, which is why some economists described his method as akin to that of a shaman, that is, a sorcerer or fortune-teller that the industrial and post-industrial world often calls *primitive*.

In any case, the future, its prediction, or action upon it remains

one of the most important themes and justifications of economics, as it was in the case of Adam Smith, Karl Marx, John Keynes, or Milton Friedman: we are at point C (the present, which not everyone understands) and to reach point G (pleasure, prosperity, the future solution) we must first pass through point F (the painful changes). In almost all cases, from the Great Depression, through Soviet economists to the magical formulas of neoliberalism more recently, a specialty of economic experts, especially those with the ability to create the future rather than predict it (IMF, World Bank), has been at least catastrophic.

In any case, one thing seems clear: the future, the anxiety about the future, is another constitutive element of the human condition. That is, it is another ahistorical component of history, and both orbit each other like two stars, like two tango dancers.

15. Propaganda by Repetition, Censorship by Forgetting

LOOKING AT THE POLITICAL CHANGES in different countries around the world, I suspect there is a psychological rule that weighs on political and cultural phenomena: those who, in their early adolescence, lived under a certain political regime, will soon become supporters of the opposite. This phenomenon (if it is indeed true) I have observed in different countries in Latin America, the United States, or Europe, although reality is so intertwined with different dimensions that each case becomes a particular one. Just as Chomsky managed to demonstrate that there is a Universal Grammar rooted in the human brain, it is very possible that there is a political and ideological dynamic in the neurological nature of every human being. This says nothing about justice or the logic of power, but it does say a lot about why individuals and peoples are capable of mass behaviors that the logic of circumstances cannot explain. But this is not the central theme of this book. Let's return to the analysis of propaganda.

Information is a process that appeals to the rationality of the consumer, to put it in modern terms. On the other hand, both (commercial) advertising and (political) propaganda target the unconscious, the most primitive instincts. In the case of advertising, it is desire, plain and pure, like sexual desire; in the case of propaganda, it arises from two basic and

primitive emotions, the first more basic, primitive, and powerful than the second: fear and hope. Advertising and propaganda target the unconscious, the most primitive instincts, the reptilian brain that lies deep within all of us, beneath the rational cortex: hunger, sex, fear.

But, although actions arise from this deep unconscious, no one wants to admit it. No one wants to accept that their political ideas, for example, those deep passions from tribal prehistory, are not based on reason, let alone on a logical analysis of reality. Therefore, these irrational decisions are rationalized with elements and discourses that refer to and appeal to supposed rational thoughts, to external facts, and not to individual dreams and nightmares. All of which they call Truth.

From a philosophical and analytical perspective, there is a spectrum whose extremes are occupied on one side by critical thinking and on the other by propaganda. In psychological terms, propaganda finds fertile ground among conservative groups, as they are the ones who have been intellectually trained from a very early age to believe. Faith in what comes from above is a virtue, while questioning a given order, a revelation, is seen as the work of dark forces that seek to change moral values and turn the world upside down. Faith is a virtue in itself. If logic contradicts the story of Noah, the more virtuous the believer who believes it while denying any possibility of the evolution of species from a small number of animals saved from the universal flood.

Without a propensity to believe, no propaganda can succeed. Skepticism is not its strength. A single contradiction could destroy a scientific theory, but a thousand contradictions will never destroy a religious text. Quite the opposite. If one believes despite logical and dialectical contradictions, they have passed the test. Belief is based on fragmented and repetitive discourses, like a rosary, like a Sunday sermon in any church, whether Catholic, Protestant; whether a Muslim mosque, a Jewish temple, Buddhist or Hindu. For any form of critical thinking, doubt is necessary. This is not to say that the left cannot harbor dogmatic individuals with a religious form of thinking, but rather that the left or progressive groups are more trained in the articulation of unfragmented thoughts, in more sophisticated and holistic theories and narratives in their explanation of reality.

To the psychological dimension, we must add the historical dimension, which depends on a cultural process. In this sense, to understand our time, it is necessary to compare it with two major previous periods

that, although they developed in the West, were spread through the colonization and imperialism of European and North American powers in recent centuries. One is the Middle Ages, and the other is the Modern Age. Our time resembles the former more than the latter. Our time reacts to and distances itself from the latter, dominated, in its intellectual and institutional elite, by the philosophies of the Enlightenment that introduced secular governments and struggles for equality against their own dominant colonial powers. We are approaching the former, a new Middle Ages where reality is increasingly less material and factual and increasingly more virtual, where social epistemology moves away from rational analysis and admiration for the scientific method to understand the world and societies and moves closer to medieval faith as a way of creating its own reality through fragmented, repetitive discourses typical of sermons and propaganda.

But our Neo-feudalism is not the feudalism of a thousand years ago. Although the religious paradigm begins to replace the secular one, a new dimension foreign to the Middle Ages emerges: the believer is not a selfless worker, an austere vassal. They are a consumer of both material and virtual realities. They are a consumer of excitements. They are a pornographic spirit who needs to buy a reality to replace their own, a story they know is false but want to believe is true. The only flaw of such a product is not that it is false, but that it is not believable. It is no coincidence that new *deep fake* technologies are primarily used in politics and pornography; both are closely related.[33] On the other hand, sophisticated technologies to deceive people are not strictly necessary when a large portion of the population is not even sophisticated.[xiv] This, which might be read as an insult, is merely an observation about the two major poles of opinion creation: education and media entertainment. As access to information has been democratized with the internet, the solution has been to lower the level of education in favor of an increase in entertainment, that is, in *distraction*. Societies are sick because they have moved away from art and closer to amusement.

[xiv] With the rise of *deep fake* videos where we see well-known politicians saying things they never said, various labs have responded with other software that detects this manipulation, mainly based on details such as the fact that there are few photographs on the Internet of public figures with their eyes closed, which is why deep fakes fail to realistically reproduce their blinking. Of course, in technology, it's all a matter of time (see Condie, Bill, and Leigh Dayton. "Four AI Technologies That Could Transform the Way We Live and Work." Nature, vol. 588, no. 7837, Dec. 2020, pp. S126–28).

In past centuries, this distraction was largely exercised in circuses and churches. I am not making a judgment about the metaphysical truth of any religion but rather its political use. The more social misery, the more social injustice, the more prayer and donations. Reality did not change, but its perception did.

Postmodernity meant an abandonment of the paradigm of critical skepticism, analysis, and reason as substitutes for authority and a return to religious faith as the legitimization of truth or a representation of the world (shortly before, and during the Modern Era, occupied by faith in science and technology).[xv] We have progressively entered a new Middle Ages, albeit illuminated with neon signs and plasma screens. To the hyper-fragmentation of narratives, to the repetition of prayers and advertising rosaries, we must add the logic of image consumption. Although in its early days the internet meant a timid return to written culture, it did not take long to return to images and, even more, to images as a way of creating junk sensibilities (as false as *fake news*) and something akin to disjointed thinking. Just as the bas-reliefs of Gothic churches told stories to an illiterate and brutalized people, worn out by work outside and sermons inside, the internet, through its "*influencers*" on YouTube or TikTok, are the new shepherds of a McDonaldized world. But if history rhymes, it does not repeat itself. That religious faith has undergone some significant changes.

According to PEW, religious affiliation in the United States has declined, from 63 percent in 1970 to 38 percent in 2018. This does not mean that the religious spirit has given way to critical thinking, but quite the opposite. Faith has migrated from traditional churches to digital sects like 4chan. The most contemporary "War on Science" explains why only four out of ten Americans trust science.

In the Protestant world, everything is atomized, even monotheism, which brings us back to the pre-Christian religions of the Teutonic peoples. One of the new sects, one of the most well-known and powerful in terms of followers, is QAnon. This sect, born from an alternative social network dominated by Nazis and fascists, called *4chan*, fulfills the requirements of a centuries-old Christian tradition. For QAnon, as for the

[xv] Postmodernism ended, among other things, the revolutionary spirit of the humanists of Constantinople and, much earlier, the critique of thinkers like the Arab philosopher Averroes or the Englishman Adelard of Bath, translator of scientific works from Arabic and one of the first *modernus* in the 12th century.

Christians of the Middle Ages, the world is ruled by the Devil, and the devil is not concerned with the outrageous ambitions of capitalists who concentrate all the wealth of the impoverished and frustrated faithful but with something related to sexuality. Something horrible, like pornography, homosexuality, and, worse, pedophilia. Their cause and banner, defined as "The Great Awakening" (Deep State), knows nothing about imperialist massacres and abuses around the world, nor about the theft from workers in the most powerful country in the world, but about those things between the legs that, according to them, God condemned because Creation came out a bit flawed. Since our century follows the Political Century, witches and heretics can no longer be burned but political opponents, that is, leftists, progressives, and liberals (in American terminology). Since our century comes after the great trauma of the Second World War, old Nazi theories can no longer be repeated (not yet) and even less so European traditions from previous centuries about Jews eating children on Friday nights and more recent American traditions about the sexual potency of Black men who could deflower all the innocent blondes, some tempted by pleasure according to the pornographic imagination of the masters, and for whom lynching was recommended just in case.

16. The Curve of Excitement

ONE OF THE MOST REPEATED PHRASES among voters of the so-called "Free World" is that they prefer a "businessman" as president, because he is someone who knows how to manage a company. We won't revisit the obvious fact that a country is not a business, nor are its citizens employees, which explains the utter failure of so many presidents who were "successful businessmen." The exceptions of the capitalist system, the "successful men," are promoted in all media as proof of the system's virtues. Even during slavery, there were Black slave owners, but no one in their right mind would present these exceptional cases as proof of the slave system today. Another cliché deeply rooted in popular narrative is the assertion and belief that citizens vote for "someone who represents them," for

"someone who resembles them," or for "someone who understands their needs."

Not without irony, this majority of industrial or service workers who barely make ends meet, who hardly have health insurance, who can only exceptionally afford vacations in the hated Mexico and don't even have enough savings to retire decently, who mostly live in debt (whether for the sin of studying or for being lawnmowers with the Confederate flag on their trucks) passionately and furiously vote for billionaires like Donald Trump—because he truly represents them.

But this is not just a curious peculiarity of Republicans in the United States. For some reason, the Senate and the "House of Representatives" are full of millionaires. In fact, 66 percent of senators and more than half of the representatives in the lower house belong to the top one percent of the country's wealthiest. When the conclusion is that the poor need the rich to represent their rights, anyone would reasonably understand that there is a very fine and persistent propaganda effort at work, like the one in the 19th century that led slaves to defend their masters to the death.

One must either accept it or fight a war already lost; to a large extent, social media is entertainment. That is, among other things, political distraction material. There are other spaces moving in the same direction. The path of money and power. The path of dehumanization.

New technologies, like Augmented Reality or Virtual Reality, are not so different from their predecessors. Overstimulating the consumer's senses is what humanity has been investing in for the past 150 years through new media, from the rotary press in 1843 to the internet, passing through radio, cinema, and television. All of them act on the senses. In reality, the investment of so many millions of dollars to develop augmented reality technology for various uses, whether military or mere entertainment, is not so different from the old and until recently forbidden effect of marijuana. Users of Augmented Reality and marijuana smokers report exactly the same thing: an increased sensitivity to the world as we know it. In Mozambique, where (at least in the 90s) marijuana was a wild herb, a Cuban doctor friend said that after his first "Mueda cigar" he could hear jazz, and a Swiss journalist friend assured me she could feel the moonlight on her skin. For my part, the absence of electric light in the abandoned cities of the Portuguese settlers was more impressive (let's say, exciting) than the excess of lighting in Western shopping malls.

Like any drug, consumption produces an effect opposite to the desired one: insensitivity, anesthesia, if not depression. The effect produced by this overstimulation may be similar to that of alcohol and other stimulant drugs, represented by the Gaussian curve: after a rise toward euphoria, comes the descent into depression. In many cases, at this point, the individual becomes aggressive at the slightest stimulus contrary to their desires. From a sociological perspective, we are at that historical moment when the need for antagonism and combat is no longer a private matter but a collective one, with a reality augmented by social media. Like everything collective, it has a political translation, and power knows it. The phenomenon has migrated from a bookish struggle in the rational cortex to an emotional struggle in the reptilian center. That is, from an ideological translation, it is a shift from the left to the right; from a sense of collectivity and solidarity for others who do not directly and immediately benefit me, to the tribal combat of "the losers" who want to take away what belongs to us by our own merit: some privilege that sets us apart, elevates, and distances us from the common folk.

Like insects, we are dazzled by neon lights. We believe ourselves superior to the mwani of Mozambique for the simple reason of appearances. But the strategy of investing in new and better technologies to excite the senses is old and does not consider what both the Enlightenment and older cultures took into account: the elevation of the intellect (sometimes referred to as spirit, knowledge, or enlightenment). Only the excitation and over-excitation of the senses is futile. Its ultimate destination is addiction and the need for ever-increasing stimulation and, finally, depression. To prevent this from happening, it would be necessary to modify the genetic code of human beings, a result of hundreds of thousands of years of evolution and adaptation—and this would never be possible without running an extremely high risk of self-annihilation as a species.

Art and thought require a certain austerity of means. When too much is invested in special effects and artificial plot twists in cinema, the viewer's ability to feel and reflect is destroyed. This was essentially the proposal of the so-called "Imperfect Cinema" in Latin America, as a critical alternative to the dominance of Hollywood. The same happens in philosophy, in the sciences, and in democracy in general: when the means become the ends, the spectacle, the entertainment, the distraction, critical thinking comes under attack, under the bombardment of distraction and fragmentation. This is what happens on the Internet, on social media, to

the point that not only a book but even a more austere medium like radio (often an instrument of political manipulation, especially in the 20th century) becomes a pause to the anxiety of interrupting a reflection or a perception due not only to the anxiety of stimulation but also to the urgency of expressing an opinion on practically everything, that is, nothing.

The freedom of the photocopier

AS WE HAVE SEEN, THE MEDIA, communications, and religious, political, and ideological ideas have a neurological basis. But the way this inherited condition functions or is manipulated and exploited to the extreme by the market or by a personal dictator depends on a culture and a historical paradigm, that framework from which perhaps—if we are not too optimistic—only radical critical thought can escape to some extent. Psychosocial manipulation is also not limited to a simple advertising agency and a consumer audience but depends on an ideological and civilizational system.

Let us briefly look at a current example. The most important factor in the monetization of a *YouTuber* (domestic video producer, called a "creator") is their own analysis of the popularity of their videos, data that the platform itself provides in detail. In this sense, all experts agree on the need to see "what the audience wants" so that "the creator" can focus on that topic, that aspect, and that style. This is then sold as a response of supply to demand. Over time, "the creator" of content will have specialized in satisfying a specific audience that was not created by them—just as the fleeting popularity of phenomena like the Minions was not a decision of the global children's guild but rather a publicity campaign that cost nearly a billion dollars.

The *artisanal* video creator, without the capital of Universal Studios and McDonald's, will educate and develop themselves based on this demand without realizing that the demand, the audience's sensitivity, was previously created by a mega digital industry that, in turn, is framed within the paradigm of its time, that is, within capitalism and post-capitalism, which considers success to be popularity, money, and the commodification of existence.

All very creative.

III. The Ideological Framework

Capitalism and Liberalism

Something Went Wrong

A century ago, Christian fundamentalists in the United States took note of the growing popularity of Darwin's Theory of Evolution among scientists and decided to create their own scientific theory, which they called "Intelligent Design." According to this theory, based more on perplexities than on simple evidence, what appears to be a logical adaptation of organisms to their environment can only be due to the design created by a superior intelligence that created itself before the Universe existed. Not by the force of reason, but by the political force of a religion, a group of fanatics managed to ban the teaching of the Theory of Evolution in the United States for several generations.

However, Darwin's Theory is more than effective in explaining the development of biological phenomena, even in the most complex designs of nature, such as the false eye on the tail of a fish or the stripes on a zebra's skin to confuse the gaze of its predators. Its complexity has an extremely simple principle: there is nothing that even the most random method of trial and error, with a few million occurrences, cannot correct and adapt.

Before Darwin, Adam Smith had laid the foundations of economic liberalism, according to which each individual, by pursuing their own benefit, inevitably leads to a "natural equilibrium" and "general welfare." The success of merchants seemed to confirm this: throughout history, they were relevant agents, not only in the exchange of goods but also in the exchange of culture and knowledge.

The successful (and cursed, for the believers of Noah) theory of evolution by Darwin has been updated several times, for example, to explain the fact that an individual sacrifices themselves for the benefit of the group or species. A bird that alerts its peers with its song becomes easy

prey for a predator, but through its sacrifice, the individual saves the group. In human terms, this is called altruism, a heroic act. Different intellectual peculiarities in humans (such as a pathological state of alertness in some individuals) can be explained as a detriment to the individual for the benefit of the species, at least in past times.

In almost all contemporary societies, the "less fit" survive thanks to the solidarity and compassion of the group. Perhaps *bullying* is a remnant of prehistoric times when the group or some individuals within it understood that the weak were an inconvenient burden, but today culture and moral sensitivity have reversed this practice through the education of new values. The eternal dialectical dispute between Power and Justice (between the possibilities of individual benefit and those of group benefit) has tilted in favor of the latter. The practical dispute, however, seems to be defined once again by Power, by the imposition of the strongest, not without first hijacking the dialectic of their adversaries, those who fight for justice, generally an egalitarian dialectic in favor of the group. To see this, one only needs to look at the economic and military power accumulated by the one percent of the world's population, which, in principle, aligns with the theory and moral justification of "the survival of the fittest," which so seduced imperial Europe in the 19th century, Americans in the 20th century, and the rich and powerful of all centuries.

On the contrary, the fact that the less fit, the poorest, reproduce more than the fittest, the richest, would seem to indicate that culture contradicts the evolutionary principle of "the survival of the fittest." So, do moral values confirm or contradict the Theory of Evolution?

Most likely, the former. Morality, culture, and education can mean the suppression or limitation of the violence of the strongest (the fittest) against the rest of the group, against the rest of the species. That is, Justice is not a contradiction of the basic principles of Darwinian Evolution but one of its necessary elements for the survival of the group.

In contrast to everything previously discussed, we finally arrive at a possible element of contradiction, rupture, or a terminal pathology, such as cancer in the logic of a healthy body. The recent history of humanity seems to show a serious and critical exception to the logic of evolution. It is not the poorest societies, the least developed countries, that are threatening the existence of the species on Earth, but the most powerful, "the fittest."

After an explosion in technological development that has led us to robotics and artificial intelligence, humanity finds itself in a position of high vulnerability. For many reasons. One of them lies in the process of its own intelligence. During the 20th century, specialists had observed something known as "the Flynn effect." In general, the average IQ of individuals had been steadily increasing, most likely due to improvements in nutrition, education, and the elimination of lead, to which, up until my generation, we were exposed in various forms, such as water pipes and toothpaste tubes. However, as soon as the 21st century began, the growth curve of IQ began to decline, for the first time since records have been kept. The prime suspect in this process of decline has been technology itself.

This danger lies not only in the greater military destructive power of the most powerful nations but also in their capacity to destroy the environment. It is the fittest (the strongest, the richest, the winners) who are most capable of endangering the existence of the human species. A danger that has ceased to be a potentiality and is beginning to materialize.

It is possible that human intelligence (at least that which serves power) is a cancerous abnormality of our species, considering that sharks and ants have been on this planet millions of years before us. In just a few thousand years, and especially as a result of the last few centuries, the human species has come dangerously close, as never before, to extinction by its own hand.

Sooner or later, human intelligence will end up exterminating the species. Those who deny this possibility based on multiple previous predictions, almost all of them rooted in religious messianism, use the same logic that could be summarized as: "*I will never die because I have never died before*."

Species do not evolve toward a superior state, but rather toward better adaptation. This is why we can think that human intelligence at some point became its original opposite: from being one of the best examples of adaptation to the environment, through the adaptation of the environment to its needs, it has become the opposite: human intelligence is a pathology, like so many in nature, that leads a species to extinction due to its maladaptation, as at the beginning, as a consequence of the destruction of that same environment adapted to the needs of a single species and a single social class within the species. The danger to human existence and that of many other species on the planet is due to the initial success of human intelligence, which lost its adaptive power in its success in

adapting the world to itself. Since 1970, the world has begun to consume more resources than the planet can renew, while the dominant ideology, capitalism and its most radical version, neoliberalism, insist that the solution is to continue destroying the planet to maximize the only dimension that matters in a (successful) human being, that is, *profits*. In fact, just as the word *improvement* (improvement) was born in England to mean "greater income" (from *empowerment*, profit), so in different languages today the word *benefits* is understood as "economic gains." It is no coincidence that capitalism was born with the exercise of *improvement* of the land and the expropriation and privatization of communal lands in the 16th century in England and later in other parts of the world, such as in America and Africa to this day. Not to mention the overabundance of modern English expressions that refer to money or some material gain to express other aspects of human life such as interest in something or happiness or beauty ("*you feel like a million dollars*").

Both capitalist countries and so-called socialist or communist ones are framed within the logic of capitalism, which demands that, in order for those at the bottom not to lose their jobs and not starve, countries must achieve unlimited annual economic growth in GDP. In reality, a country's GDP growth does not always mean better wages, but it always means better profits for investors. This obsession of capitalist economics emerged in the 1930s, during the Great Depression, and since then it has added the production of necessary, unnecessary, constructive, destructive, and polluting goods into the same number. In 1937, its inventor, the economist and later Nobel laureate Simon Kuznets, warned the U.S. Congress of the danger of a simplified use of his own invention, but the Bretton Woods conference canonized it in 1944 as the sole measure of economic and social success. In 1962, in the midst of the Cold War, Kuznets insisted: "*It is necessary to distinguish between the quantity and quality of growth, between costs and returns, and between the short and long term. The goals for greater growth must specify what and for what we need more growth*."[34] Jason Hickel observes that "*since 1980, global GDP has tripled, while the number of poor surviving on less than five dollars a day has grown by 1.1 billion; this is because, beyond a certain point, growth begins to produce more negative effects than positive ones*."[35]

For a reason rooted in the system, culture, and likely in the human tendency to deceive oneself in the long term to achieve short-term satisfactory results, these warnings went unnoticed or were never seriously

considered by any world leader, major organization, or media awareness campaign—quite the opposite. Consequently, neither were they by the people. It doesn't matter that since 1970 the planet has produced enough to feed more than its population, but the exploitation of resources to maintain unlimited growth is several times what the planet can sustain. An absurdity that has crystallized over many generations as common sense: "there can be no redistribution without growth," etc. The British biologist and historian David Attenborough summed it up clearly: "*Anyone who thinks it's possible to sustain infinite growth in a finite environment is either a madman or an economist*."[36]

However, if intelligence has become the primary pathology of our species, awareness of this situation could be the possible solution to our own destruction through the destruction of our environment. In the triumph of one of these lies our future on this planet and, likely, our existence in this Universe.

Of course, it's also possible that optimism is part of our own weakness as a species: we deceive ourselves as *another way* of adapting the environment, reality, to our desires and not the other way around.

Fossils of Capitalism

WALKING THROUGH THE GRAND Canyon, it's not uncommon to come across a piece of wood that petrified millions of years ago. In common language, to petrify means to become immobilized, but to become immobilized, to petrify, that piece of wood had to cease being wood and turn into stone. The same goes for a leaf imprinted on a rock that has been split open, a snail, a fish, or a bee fossilized 70 million years ago. Those fossils are no longer wood, bone, flesh, or nails but, essentially, rock. What we see is the form, the reflection of a distant past, not its original nature.

The same process occurs with foundational ideas, from religious to ideological ones. But the dogmatist transforms the original form into the original fetish. *Forms outlive content*. In the time of Jesus, the accusation against the teachers of the law, those scribes and Pharisees who administered religion from a position of power—as legislators in a banana republic or neocolony do today—was that they had preserved the form but lost the content. The same happens with the U.S. Constitution. The obsession

lies in deducing and interpreting *correctly* the original intent of those who lived 250 years ago and spoke a form of English somewhat different from today's and, above all, lived in a world that has disappeared and had no idea of the current reality and problems. A classic example is the debate surrounding the Second Amendment: does that simple line refer to the right to bear arms of a "well-regulated militia" or of disconnected individuals, exercising the dogma of individual rights, such as the right to property, above any other right?[xvi] Is it necessary to read that line as a religious person reads a sacred text assumed to have been written by the hand of God, or can we understand that the so-called Founding Fathers were not only mortal men but also powerful slave owners who organized a constitution in their image and convenience in the name of universal principles?

The same can be seen in ideological interpretations that turn into dogmas. All great ideas, those that have spread to different peoples and generations, undergo an observable process of fossilization—which, like a fossil, is also a process of simplification. By this, I don't mean only a fixation and inability to change but the opposite. It's a common accusation to label Marxists as dogmatic, despite it being one of the most open currents of thought to corrections and new interpretations of its own ideology or worldview. It's no coincidence that the left has historically been more politically fragmented than the right. The reason, I believe, lies in the fact that, despite the multiplicity of traditional resources (religion, homeland, order, capital, property) that unite the right, it is economic interests that dominate the world, while the left has spent most of its history deliberating different strategies of resistance to that power.

Generally, accusations about the dogmatism of Marxist critique come from the opposite end of the political spectrum, the far-right liberals. Their fossilized figures are often prophets like Adam Smith or Milton Friedman—a moderate version of the radical Friedrich Hayek. But their readings are fossilized and only retain the form, such as the idea of the "invisible hand of the market" or the principle of "self-interest as the

[xvi] "*A well-regulated Militia being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed*" (*A well regulated Militia being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed*"). The "conservative" interpretation of the NRA and gun advocates consists of ignoring the "well-regulated militia" part and interpreting "*people*" not as the people but as "individuals." The most objective thing we can say beyond the interpretation of the text is that it is this latter interpretation that has dominated practice, turning the United States into an arsenal of guns in the name of a security that has never arrived due to daily massacres.

engine of progress," when Smith himself never reached this level of fossilized simplification.

In a September 2022 interview, analyzing the present problems and the future of the United States, economist Nicholas Eberstadt was categorical: "*what we really need instead of a Nobel Prize in economics is a Nobel Prize in literature, because we are talking about the Zeitgeist, the human heart, all the things that give meaning to humanity*."[37]

The fossilization of capitalist language

LET'S START WITH THE SEMANTIC-LINGUISTIC FOUNDATION of capitalist ideology, which is summarized in its own definition. The literature on the subject is abundant, but the variations are minimal. We all know this definition, but to make it even more impersonal, let's ask an artificial intelligence robot (like everything else, invented and developed by wage workers or with government funds for the benefit of private corporations), one of those specialists in summarizing the great legacy of human prejudices and clichés, like ChatGPT.

The response is predictable and summarizes the common sense of theorizations on the subject over the last few centuries: "*Capitalism is an economic system characterized by private ownership of the means of production and the creation of goods or services for profit in a competitive market. In a capitalist system, individuals and businesses own and control the resources used to produce goods and services, such as land, factories, and equipment, and are free to buy and sell resources, goods, and services produced with them. The market forces of supply and demand determine the prices of goods and services, and individuals and businesses are motivated by the potential for profit to make investments and engage in economic activity*."[xvii]

A simple analysis reveals that the entire definition and its ideology are based on ambiguities, arbitrariness, and contradictions. The "*private ownership of the means of production and the creation of goods or services for profit*" is indisputable since Marx. The problem arises with "*a competitive*

[xvii] The word *capitalist* was probably first used by James Mill, father of John Stuart Mill, in his *Elements of Political Economy* of 1821. Later, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels used *capitalism* more systematically and consciously to refer to a specific mode of production within a broader historical framework.

market." Market competition existed (for millennia) before capitalism and, as we will see in this study, was destroyed by capitalism. Its archangels, the private corporations, apart from being dictatorships, do not engage in free competition but in the *destruction* of competition. This has been the case since the 16th century with the privatization and expulsion of peasants from their lands in England and the destruction of the economies and free competition of Asian markets under the cannons of the English, Dutch, and French.

Then: "*In a capitalist system, individuals and businesses own and control the resources used to produce goods and services*." Nothing could be further from the truth. The confusion arises from considering *individuals* as abstract entities, *as if they were pieces in a game of checkers rather than chess*. Unless by *individuals* it does not refer to workers, producers, and consumers. That is, the majority of humanity.

Another statement that was never true, for the reasons already noted, is that these individuals and businesses "*are free to buy and sell resources, goods, and services produced*." A monument to the hypocrisy of imperialism and the finances that govern global business.

Not only governments but, above all, corporations make the following statement a mere idealism, if not hypocrisy that suddenly forgets slavery, oppression, and coups in Global South countries to obtain better prices and more profits for imperial companies: "*The market forces of supply and demand determine the prices of goods and services*."

The common idea that "*individuals and businesses are motivated by the potential for profit*" assumes and imposes that all individuals are equally "motivated by the potential for profit" and not "forced." Those individuals who have other motivations and other ideas about existence cannot escape the social system, unless they retreat to an uninhabited island in the Pacific. They are imposed an action and, in most cases, a desire through necessity. But here's the thing: those individuals who are not motivated by mere economic gain must suffer the stripping of their political rights and live in an authoritarian, dictatorial system that often kindly calls itself "democracy."

From a more restricted perspective, the phrase "*individuals and businesses are motivated by the potential for profit*," the engine of imprecisely so-called capitalist economies, has also been revealed as the great global problem, as it ignores the *externalities* of its brilliant businesses, such as, to mention just a few examples, the degradation, simplification, and

dehumanization of education and culture, the commodification of advertising and media, the widespread hatred fueled by conflicts on social media, and, as if that weren't enough, the destruction of the planet.

Capitalist and liberal ideology was never applied according to its own idealism, because reality cannot be simplified to that extreme. In fact, it was its apostles who always ensured it was applied in small doses, as long as it served the interests of the hegemonic micro-classes. The liberal capitalist dogma is an act of linguistic manipulation through its simplification. Like the famous "*We the people*" does not clarify that by *people* it only meant white male property owners, where the liberal capitalist dogma says "individuals are free," it does not clarify which individuals it refers to; but we all know they are those who have the money and power to be free to impose their will on the rest. It is a linguistic extremism typical of any religion: "the *word* created the world." Therefore, the word is more important than any other reality. The word does not explain but imposes, inventing its own reality independent of any proof or evidence. Confusing desire with reality can be catastrophic for any individual, except if it is an individual with power. Then, it is catastrophic for reality.

The liberal utopia that never existed

THROUGH RELIGIOUS OR POLITICAL NARRATIVE a cohesive and parallel reality is created, one that justifies and promotes the interests of power and the minority in power or the majority aspiring to one day occupy power in a sort of individual utopia. In this sense, it is necessary to pay attention not only to the powerful media that since the Modern Era have created or consolidated this *narrative*, but also to the more traditional method of proselytism and evangelization that comes from established religions.

Since the Renaissance, dominant Christianity (let's set aside subordinate theologies, such as Liberation Theology) became the fundamental ally of capitalism. Both, capitalism and religion, are professions of faith, but Christianity adapted to capitalism, not the other way around, contradicting all the precepts of the Gospels, where there was no private property, no praise for the rich and powerful classes, no condemnation of

paying taxes ("render unto Caesar what is Caesar's"), and no fierce defense of wars and weapons.

The conservative (capitalist) narrative has tirelessly repeated the opposite in recent centuries. Even if we consider Protestantism (the revolution of "capitalist ethics") as a return to the Old Testament, we will see that neither in the Old Testament does private property exist; nor were its kings or leaders praised for any kind of liberalism; nor did anything like free competition between individuals in a market that established social norms and laws ever exist—quite the opposite. Like all historical religions and philosophies, in their origins they were collectivist (which does not mean the loss of *individuality* but societies not based on *individualism* as dogma), from Confucianism to the Abrahamic religions, not to mention the rich and extensive African and American traditions in the same sense.

In fact, individual freedom was always condemned in the name of submission to God and political leaders. When rebellions occurred, they were not carried out in the name of the right of individuals to freely decide what to think and how to live, but rather the opposite. Moreover, the biblical prophets always criticized social injustices based on the greed of the rich, which caused significant social disparities. These were periodically resolved with a "forgive our sins," where *sins* meant *debts* that the king of the time would cancel with a single decree, while land redistributions were frequent and stemmed from the will of a centralized government, not a free market, and certainly not from any sacred form of "private property."

Now let's turn to the internal logic of the capitalist-liberal dogma, which contains its own contradiction from the root: the unlimited and selfish freedom of individuals to buy and sell, through the concentration of capital (a basic condition of the capitalist system), quickly destroys the freedom of individuals, not only to buy and sell in a never-free market, but also to avoid being governed, in the broadest sense of the word, by an increasingly smaller and more powerful elite.

This is not only historical evidence, but it was also seen and warned by the most revered founders of modern liberalism, from Adam Smith to the liberal economists of the 21st century. Adam Smith barely used his famous metaphor of "the invisible hand of the market" a couple of times in the liberal bible *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), and not infrequently based on a particular humanist faith that never occurred in history. In *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), the central thesis of the father of liberalism revolves around the human capacity for empathy, social

solidarity, and cooperation. Perhaps his greatest mistake lies in the fact that, while recognizing that the excessive accumulation of the rich, who employ thousands of workers, only satisfies their "*natural selfishness and rapacity*," he trusted that "the invisible hand" could redistribute this concentrated wealth to each of the workers.[38] Something similar to his idea of the "impartial spectator," a kind of Freudian superego capable of regulating the excesses of selfishness and social rapacity of the powerful. Too utopian, if not naive.

The same invisible hand, according to Smith, would ensure that large industrialists and investors would always prefer to invest in their own countries rather than abroad. In any case, Smith relied on the good feelings of people to redistribute the benefits of a system that was amoral. He even trusted that the love of money was not as great as social shame, so the super-rich would give up part of their fortunes through charity, moved by this moral (social) sentiment. Again, history seems to indicate the opposite.

That *invisible hand* was responsible for creating wealth, inequalities, and redistribution, first by dogmatizing selfishness and then appealing to altruism as an ad hoc solution to all the problems of the initial approach—whether it was the "good heart" of the rich or the "necessary evil" of the state. Contemporary liberals forgot this second part, the value of cooperation, which is one of the most important prescriptions (legal, moral, and religious) of all civilizations throughout history. Moreover, in the sociopathic version of Ayn Rand, the ultraliberals decreed that only selfishness was moral, while altruism was a form of human degeneration.

The central idea of selfishness as the engine of social welfare is based on the understanding that it is a core part of human nature. In this, conservative liberals, who are generally religious creationists, are faithful subscribers to Darwinism. Anything that attempts to limit the natural tendency toward selfishness, toward creative destruction, is a limitation of *freedom*.

It goes without saying that this is an arbitrary and narrow definition of freedom, but even setting aside this philosophical factor, we see that it does not align with psychological, neurological, or anthropological studies, such as those by psychologist and ethologist Frans de Waal or Karen Wynn in child psychology. At the beginning of this century, Wynn and her team studied the reactions of children aged six to twelve months, exposed to scenes with geometric figures that behaved either selfishly or

altruistically toward other geometric figures. They discovered that later, when the children were offered the chance to choose one of the figures, they all chose those that had behaved altruistically—*prosocial*.[39] This does not mean that selfishness is entirely learned, but rather that in society, from the earliest age, individuals prefer others who do not stand out for that personal trait.[40] If, in addition, we consider the cultural and ideological framework in which these children will be educated and raised (consumerist and success-driven capitalism), it is not hard to imagine that they will be trained and encouraged minute by minute to adopt a selfish and self-centered attitude.[xviii]

Joseph Schumpeter is another of the liberal and neoliberal idols, though, by far, more serious than Rand. Schumpeter is one of the most cited economists and philosophers by the political right in recent generations, almost exclusively to mention his famous "creative destruction" (almost as cited as Adam Smith's "invisible hand") and his judgment on the inefficiency of the state to create new technologies and his faith in the individual and the free market to generate prosperity.

In his famous book *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* from 1942, Schumpeter concluded that capitalism and democracy are not necessarily compatible and that in the capitalist system, societies are dominated by millionaire elites and the unchecked power of large corporations that manipulate governments and political systems in their favor, something that is quite far from any idea of democracy and that has only become more radicalized, especially since the 1970s. The renowned economics professor Henry Calvert Simons, mentor to Milton Friedman at the University of Chicago and one of the champions of *laissez-faire* (let it be), was explicit about the anti-democratic dangers arising from the concentration of power in a corporation with influence over political power: "*The great enemy of democracy is monopoly, in all its forms... corporations, trade associations, unions—or, in general, the organization and concentration of power in functional classes*."[41]

In Schumpeter's time, the greatest problem of capitalism (aside from the power of individuals and corporations driven by the unlimited pursuit of economic profit) was not yet framed as it is today, though it was still almost treated as a footnote: the destruction of the planet. It was known, or beginning to be known, that the role of governments in

[xviii] Similar studies on racism yield the same conclusions.

economic and technological development, not to mention the more obvious rescue of entire societies from the crises inherent to capitalism (economic crises). It was known, and Adam Smith knew it almost two centuries earlier, that the free market was not practiced by those imperial centers that promoted it as an ideology for consumption by the colonies.

The association of capitalism with the free market, which remains popular and central in political discourse today, is as forced as the association of capitalism and the free market with freedom and democracy. The doctrine of *laissez faire* the market as a formula for economic prosperity was never applied to economically prosperous countries, such as those in Europe or the United States, as in all cases they developed under strong protectionist policies, under heavy state intervention in the economy (not only in times of crisis but also to develop almost all the technology now attributed to private "garage geniuses") and they enriched themselves through brutal plunder, oppression, and imperialist destruction across all continents. Where the ideology of the free market was applied most radically was in their colonies, and always through direct imposition, via institutions like the IMF or their own local enablers, often resorting to bloody military dictatorships. Only the dictatorships in Africa and Latin America are examples of this extreme experiment orchestrated by economists like Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek, who, referring to the Chilean case, stated: "*I prefer a liberal dictatorship to a democracy that does not respect liberalism*."[42]

One of the central arguments of neoliberalism lies in the market's ability to self-regulate. What does this mean? What kind of regulation are they referring to? In every discussion, the word "self-regulation" remains in semantic limbo. If it refers to the power to avoid descending into feudal despotisms that contradict its own ideological principles (though not its historical principles, as we will explain), history has never provided any example, and all the experience following the neoliberal experiment indicates exactly the opposite: markets do not self-regulate without the intervention of the damned State, which is, paradoxically, the great regulator. Even in their monetarist versions, neoliberals explain crises as a matter of money management (issuance, liquidity, tax collection, financial balances), which is another paradox: from this perspective, it is the State that determines the very existence of the market and its potential crisis or prosperity. For neoliberalism, the State should be minimal as long as the economy works for the super-rich; when the inevitable crises arrive—not only

because it is part of the nature of capitalism but because it is managed by individuals and corporations whose goal is unlimited profits at any cost—they become the most aggressive statists, ready to plunder the people with state bailouts. During the 2009 crisis, the neoliberals in the U.S. economic government nationalized more companies (GM, banks, etc.) than all the leftist governments of the previous century combined. There was no coup d'état as in some banana republic because the affected parties—that is, the rescued ones—knew that once these mega-corporations were back on their feet, the government would not privatize them but, more than that, would return them to their "natural owners," the investors. When Barack Obama won the election, he had the greatest popular support in generations, and instead of reversing the neoliberal supercycle initiated by Ronald Reagan in 1980, he merely consolidated and radicalized it. Not only did he save mega-corporations and financial institutions, he recapitalized them with workers' money, and throughout the process, he appointed the same people responsible for the crisis. This seems to suggest that it is more likely for an *insider* like Franklin D. Roosevelt or Ronald Reagan, in times of great crisis, to enact structural changes than for an *outsider* (or someone perceived and self-perceived as an outsider like Obama) trying to make a good impression.

The free market always tends to eliminate its most basic principle: free competition. From Adam Smith to Joseph Schumpeter, the biggest problem of the free market was a consequence of its very nature, and only the government could save it from self-destruction—the same government that neoliberals wanted to minimize or eliminate in an ideal order.

If capitalism has not yet collapsed in its spiral of "creative destruction," it is because of the social programs of its governments (let's call it *subaltern socialism*) that have come to the rescue of banks and entire populations of the unemployed, drug addicts, and human beings with human problems.

From a more general (deeper, more human) perspective, there remains an even more important discussion than the merely economic one: the meaning of existence, the commodification of human beings, their psychology, and their social relationships; the virtues of the *free market* compared to freedom *in/with* the market. We will address these aspects later.

The leaf before the forest

ONE OF THE MOST COMMON PERPLEXITIES for those of us professors in the United States who come from the so-called "Underdeveloped World" (or "Developing Countries," according to the latest euphemism) occurs when we ask our students what they plan to do after they graduate. The most common answer is "anything that makes me money." Our perplexity lies in the fact that we expect an answer related to a vocation, a passion for something (doctor, pizza maker, engineer, mechanic, farmer, musician), a way of life, not a bank account.

The responses to this underdeveloped perplexity are often (especially from the underdeveloped world): "That's why we're underdeveloped, and you, professors who live in the clouds, should emigrate to the First World, not the other way around." That's as far as the great functional thinking of the dominant obviousness goes. In other words, we are underdeveloped because we don't think about money all the time; because we are not capitalists but wage earners or small entrepreneurs who need to survive and feed their families; because we don't have a superior mentality and represent an obstacle to the progress and well-being that rains down from the "efficient businessmen." For these poor readers of Adam Smith (let's assume they read him at some point), the world is flat; capitalist empires, hegemonic nations, colonies, and comprador dictatorships never existed. Social classes do not exist, much less a "class struggle"—a fantasy invented by Karl Marx, et cetera.

On one hand, the U.S. socioeconomic system forces its college students, its "future leaders," to think in this way: money first, not only to pay off the debts incurred from studying but also, later, to achieve *success*, that is, to become millionaires; everything else comes after. Unlike countries such as Uruguay or Germany (where students who graduate from the most serious universities, i.e., public ones, graduate debt-free), in the United States, the most prestigious universities are private and cost a fortune. Even those who graduate from public universities do so with heavy debts (unless they are military personnel), which means they must spend the next ten to thirty years of their lives (precisely during their most creative and productive age) trying to free themselves from the monster,

enslaving themselves to jobs they hate or that have little to do with their academic, professional, or vocational specialization.[xix]

How did we arrive at this unquestioned normality called *capitalism*, dazzled by the lights of others' progress? Let's take a very brief look at history.

The Forest Before the Tree

BEFORE DELVING INTO A DETAILED ANALYSIS of the central theme of this book (the political-narrative phenomenon of media and domination), it is necessary to place it in its historical context. As with the physical sciences themselves, a mathematical formula is not *reality* but a quantitative abstraction of a more complex reality. But that abstraction must be able to explain different phenomena, seemingly contradictory ones; phenomena that common sense and the rest of the senses perceive as chaos. In the novel *On Heroes and Tombs*, a character by Ernesto Sábato said that the important thing is to be able to explain that "*the stone that falls and the Moon that does not fall represent one and the same phenomenon*."[43]

Of course, the variables multiply when the equation attempts to summarize human complexity. There are many ways to define something, including human history. For me, history unfolds in the perpetual struggle between two main forces: power and justice. That is, the cultural, ideological, economic, and military supremacy of a minority and the need to limit and distribute that concentrated power to the rest of society through morality and law in their multiple variations.

If we pause for a moment on the first factor, we can observe that, throughout history, power has always proceeded and tended toward the accumulation of material resources through two indispensable tools: 1) *the means of physical coercion* and 2) *the means of narrating reality*, from how the

[xix] In 2021, the average student loan debt was $29,719, $5,954 more than in 2009 (Kerr, E., & Wood, S. "See How Average Student Loan Debt Has Changed". US News & World Report.) If we consider that many finish paying off their debt in fifteen to twenty years, we can understand that not everyone is in the same starting position in the repeated cliché of "the path to success" in a world wisely governed by "free competition."

world was created to how prosperity and progress were created. Later, we will try to understand and explain the first pillar before analyzing the second in more detail.

Every accumulation of one's own resources is, naturally, an expropriation of others' resources (what Marx called *mehrwert*, *added value* or *surplus value* and liberal economists called *profit*). This appropriation has two limitations: 1) the need to keep alive and functional the productive force from which surplus value is extracted, in the same way that slave owners cared for the health and compliance of their youngest slaves (the spider must not exterminate the flies) and 2) the organized struggle of productive groups or those outside the central power to limit the flow of wealth from the majority to a dominant minority.

In the times of Adam Smith and Karl Marx, the producers were, essentially, rural and industrial workers—the proletariat. However, since earlier centuries (and more decisively today), the intellectual factor of inventors of machines and new technologies has been part of this productive force from which surplus value or profit is extracted, hijacking their innovations and presenting them as their own by the ruling class, the investors, the CEOs of mega-companies like Jeff Bezos or Elon Musk.

This is the case, for example, with computing, space technologies, the Internet, robotics, and Artificial Intelligence, all products of long-term efforts and investments made mostly by governments, universities, or independent innovators before their final achievements were privatized by the revered "businessmen," the "garage geniuses," those who ultimately enriched themselves by hijacking the fruits of humanity, accumulated over centuries.[xx]

In a 1903 letter to Helen Keller (the first deaf and blind person to graduate from college and a prolific social activist for the American Socialist Party), Mark Twain already demonstrated a clear awareness of this

[xx] This idea was popularized by Mariana Mazzucato's book *The Entrepreneurial State* (*The Entrepreneurial State*, 2013), widely cited by Spanish politicians like Íñigo Errejón and by Cristina Fernández in Argentina, and urgently attacked by a series of rather elementary books like *The Myth of the Entrepreneurial State* by Deirdre McCloskey and Alberto Mingardi (2020). It is only fair to recall that Noam Chomsky proposed these same ideas much earlier, at least forty years earlier, as the author himself reminded me in a recent conversation. We discussed it back in 2009 at Princeton University and MIT and incorporated it into the book *Illusionists* (2012) and more recently in *Without Sugar* (2022). Another academic precedent can be found in the article by Kozul-Wright, Richard, "The Myth of Anglo-Saxon Capitalism: Reconstructing the History of the American State." *The Role of the State in Economic Change*, 1995, pp. 80-113.

reality: "*It takes a thousand people to invent a telegraph, a steam engine, a phonograph, a photograph, a telephone, or any other important thing, but the last one gets the credit, and we forget the others.* (…) *This should teach us that ninety-nine parts of all things that come from the intellect are plagiarisms*."[44]

But this succession of collective contributions and progress is not a horizontal line interrupted by the latest genius. There is a social order that tends to reward the last in multiple ways, not just with credit. In a capitalist order, the last is not even an inventor, but the fisherman who casts a net called *big business* and not only reaps the economic benefits of collective effort but is also recognized as "the man who changed the world," not just because he has the capital to hijack new technologies and flattering propaganda, but because the capitalist system thrives on this collective illusion, which closely resembles a fairy tale where poor peasant girls dreamed of marrying the prince, until they grew old and no longer had the physical strength or intellectual tools to rebel or, at least, to question the social order in which they were trapped.

The history of technological advancements, from the oldest to the most modern, is dominated by salaried or independent scientists and inventors who, contrary to the dominant cliché, were not motivated by the economic benefits of their discoveries. The few who were, like Thomas Edison, did everything they could to sabotage inventions far more important than the electric light bulb, such as the alternating current of the Serbian Nikola Tesla. The hegemonic ideology struggles to conceive that someone might raise a hand or make a special effort without monetary interest. Not only does it struggle; it benefits from it. Despite this, almost none of the scientific and technological progress was contributed by a capitalist, even if, by accident, a few inventors over the last century became millionaires. Not the other way around. Each new invention was quickly hijacked by the financial elite at the top of the business pyramid. In fact, the only ways to become a millionaire are to be a businessman or an absolute dictator in some peripheral country; never someone who spends decades doing research at a university, building houses, producing food for thousands of strangers, or saving lives in a hospital. Do "successful companies" stand out for their effectiveness, like Amazon? Of course—how could they not be effective when they monopolize and hijack every innovation, the product of human intellectual capital? Microsoft, Apple, Amazon, Tesla… Each invention served and serves to improve the fisherman's net, the spider's web where bees and flies alike fall—inventors, workers, and

consumers. Without even going back to the most important innovations of humanity, which occurred centuries and millennia ago, such as algebra or the invention of the algorithm by the Persian mathematician Al-Khwarizmi in the 9th century, which is crucial to the functioning of all digital technologies today, to name just one example among hundreds.

But the strategy of hijacking and accumulation is not limited to inventions and new technologies but extends to almost every other aspect of social life, from (1) the economic to (2) the political and (3) the narrative. We will pause on the political manipulation to increase *profits* when we analyze *legal corruption*, through which corporations evade taxes in tax havens, pressure poor countries through world banks and their own volatile investments ("hot money"), through which they determine the "correct policies" of deregulation, worker exploitation, and the destruction of national sovereignty through "free market" treaties—apart from writing laws almost at will in central, hegemonic, imperial countries, or whatever you want to call them.

IV. The Birth of the Ego-Commodity

PRIVATE PROPERTY, IMPERIAL DEMOCRACIES

The Industrial Revolution That Died at Birth

DURING THE 2022 WORLD CUP in Qatar, Argentinians were surprised to find that the most loyal fanbase for their team, after Argentina's, was in Bangladesh. Every time Messi's national team played, thousands of Bangladeshis took to the streets waving Argentine flags. This tradition wasn't new. It had emerged from the Falklands War between Argentina and Britain in 1982. A war with a just cause, an anti-imperialist war, though with a rather murky motivation—the criminal need of the Argentine military dictatorship to cling to power. In short, a war between two different dictatorships.

The new tradition in Bangladesh has deep historical roots: the popular anti-British sentiment born from a history forgotten in the West, a history that explains the global narrative of the last four centuries, the history of the development of capitalism, more specifically, the history of Anglo-Saxon capitalism, and the history of the so-called *Industrial Revolution*.

Not a few historians insist on identifying the origins of capitalism in the intense trade of the Netherlands in the 16th century or even earlier, in the banks of Italy. Some even point out that, by the end of the Middle Ages, the Netherlands had developed a thriving market without the involvement of a central government, something not at all unusual in the rest of the world over the preceding centuries.

If we don't confuse the market with capitalism, we can see that capitalism, as we know it today, emerged in England before *its* Industrial Revolution in the 18th century. It's also worth noting that the English Industrial Revolution, though exceptional in the scale of its impact, was not a novelty. Between the 16th and 17th centuries, in Belgium and the

Netherlands, the spinning wheel and mechanical loom had already been invented, and later, decades before the Industrial Revolution in England, in still-feudal France, the steel industry had begun to develop.

But this history, though true in the facts mentioned, like almost all the history we consume in the North and the South, is Eurocentric. That is, it's built on strategic and convenient omissions.[xxi] There were other forms of capitalism and other industrial revolutions that were destroyed and forgotten by European capitalism in other regions of the world. Both in the Islamic world and in China, there were forms of capitalism that we will never know how they might have evolved had they not been aborted. In Bengal and other regions of the Mughal Empire, a geographical area partly located in what is now Bangladesh, a form of industrial revolution took place during the commercial and productive peak of that region, which for centuries has been a symbol of poverty and underdevelopment.

From the 12th century, Bengal was occupied by Muslims, and four hundred years later it became part of the Mughal Empire, which then opened its doors to Portuguese trade and its slave trafficking. By the early 17th century, with the founding of the private companies of the English East India Company in 1599 and the Dutch West India Company in 1600, Anglo-Saxon merchants entered Bengal with promises of good business.

By the 16th century, the printing press in India had led to widespread literacy among the population, and, along with China, its trade was the most important in the world. Shortly after, in the 17th century, and due to the international demand for its manufactured goods, some anonymous Indian invented the spinning jenny, capable of processing cotton threads at high speed, that is, one of the central inventions of what would

[xxi] For example, the *Belle Époque*, the Beautiful Era, is described as "the happy years" and spans from 1870 to the start of World War I in 1914. During this period, Europe and the United States prospered and developed like never before, making possible the Art Nouveau revolution, the union of art and utilitarian products in Europe, and the first skyscrapers in Chicago. But neither Wikipedia nor, much less, the Encyclopedia Britannica mention that these happy years, years of peace, prosperity, innovation, and development in the Northwest, were strengthened by drinking (as they had been for centuries) the blood of the Global South. Not a word about the 165 million dead in India due to famines caused by Britain from 1880 to 1920; not a word about the massacre of ten million Congolese, plus millions more mutilated in the Congo for the sin of not producing at the desired pace of their white owners. The Belgian King Leopold II, decorated twenty times for his "contribution to the civilization of the world," invented this private enterprise to which he gave a flag and officially baptized as the "*Congo Free State*"… To mention just two cases.

later be called the Industrial Revolution and the basis of the great global trade of the time, a century before it was attributed to the Englishman James Hargreaves in 1764. The mechanical loom was also invented in India before it appeared in England as a major innovation. One could argue that the operation of these looms was less mechanized than the English ones, but this argument assumes that dynamic and prosperous peoples were incapable of continuing the same social and technological evolution that made them dynamic and prosperous. The strategic omission of chronological logic leads, in other cases, such as in the Americas, to the popular imagination taking it for granted that if the Spanish had not wiped out the native cultures, Mexicans today would still be wearing loincloths and practicing religious sacrifices, more or less what the Inquisition practiced in Europe for centuries after the fall of Tenochtitlan.

But let's go back a century, when world history and historiography were decided. Starting in 1605, the private companies of the Netherlands and England began arriving in India and Bengal. At that time, Dhaka was a city of nearly one million inhabitants, while London had around 300,000 and was notorious for its urban chaos, high crime rates, and lack of hygiene—personal bathing was a rarity, something associated with the "savages" of the Americas; throwing human waste out the window was a common practice.

At that time, India and Bengal had the largest textile production in the world. Even long before the cotton revolution, which replaced wool in English looms at the end of the 18th century and expanded slavery in the United States over Mexico in the early 19th century, Bengal was already producing cotton fabrics on a large scale, exporting them to countries in the region, what are now China, Indonesia, and Thailand. Most of the imports of the wealthiest and most commercially active countries in Europe also came from India and Bengal. It wasn't just *spices*, as classical history repeats, but manufactured goods. In fact, this was the problem, the reason for the conflict and the brutal colonialism that followed. Later, we will see that the same thing happened to the powerful Chinese economy, destroyed in the 18th century by English cannons in the name of the free market of their private companies.

Bengali production was spread throughout the country and stood out in clothing of all types, designs, and colors, based on two main products: calico, a rustic but practical fabric made of cotton; and muslin, a much more refined fabric, probably invented in Mosul, Iraq, as Marco

Polo himself testified in 1298. Muslin ("woven air") became a fashionable attire in Europe, but it had already been, for centuries, a garment adapted to the diverse and hotter climates of India and the Middle East, in addition to other uses, such as the production of water filters, wine filters, for medicinal purposes, and later, in cheese production. Calico, more rustic and durable, was industrialized cotton fabric produced on looms, invented and commercialized in India since the 11th century. By then, Indian looms already offered this product in various colors and printed designs.[xxii]

The Indo-Bengali industry was not only mechanized but also organized according to a division of labor usually attributed to capitalism and Western industrialization. When we talk about "the special conditions that made the Industrial Revolution possible in England," it is necessary to remember that these conditions were already developing much earlier in Asia, from an intense market (much freer than the English and Dutch) to workshops driven by technological innovations.

Certainly, the availability of rivers and natural coal in England helped to create a more radical industrial revolution than the one that occurred in Asia. Not to mention the military factor, the new firearms, and the old Anglo-Saxon utilitarian fanaticism. But the foundational factor in the creation of capitalism and, shortly after, in the creation of the global capitalist order through Northwestern imperialism was the displacement of English peasants to cities where they began to work more than ten hours a day under conditions of wage slavery.

One thing is freedom, and another is the obligation to choose among multiple options of the same thing in order to survive. The latter is what capitalism called and still calls *freedom* and the increase in income it called *prosperity*. English workers survived in miserable conditions, and their wages were higher than those of Indians and Bengalis, not because the latter were poorer but because their agricultural production of rice, wheat, and fibers for spinning was more efficient and more economical.[45] Even their innovations in naval technology allowed them to transport and commercialize their products more effectively. Once England and Holland colonized and destroyed the Indo-Bengali industry, through tariffs and cannons, they also destroyed its agricultural sector, turning it, as in

[xxii] In Latin and Romance languages, *fábrica*, *fabrique* referred and refers to a workshop where things are produced. *Faber* was a skilled worker in metal. In English, it came to mean, literally, *fabric* (*fabric*).

many other continents, into monoculture countries ("banana republics" later in Central America), which, exactly as would happen to Ireland with the potato, would lead to frequent famines and claim the lives of hundreds of millions—when not causing frequent economic crises.

Systematically, until the mid-20th century, these colonies were forced to export or simply transfer their basic food supplies to Europe, ensuring the subsistence of its proletarian class that European fields could not provide, as well as repeated famines due to climatic phenomena known in the past, such as droughts, plagues, and floods, which never caused mass and periodic deaths as during this period of brutal colonization. The century-long process of economic and industrial development in Indo-Bengal was interrupted and destroyed by protectionist laws, economic sanctions, and, above all, by the powerful force of imperial cannons—what the Anglo-Saxon world would later call the expansion of *civilization*, of *freedom*, *democracy*, and the *free market*.

Due to the massive industrial and commercial success of Indo-Bengal, in 1700 and 1721, England passed the so-called Calico Acts (named after the famous Indian fabric), prohibiting the import of most cotton textiles into England to prevent the free trade that India and Bengal exercised with better products and at better prices. England also sought to protect its wool, the primary product that had kickstarted capitalism in the previous century with the expulsion of peasants from communal lands and their replacement by sheep—and by the system of variable land rent, as we will see later. Thanks to this fierce protectionism, which it never allowed its colonies, Britain managed to develop its industries to surpass India, though it took nearly two centuries. Ironically, the great industrial prosperity in England arrived at the end of the 18th century with new looms that replaced wool with cotton and expanded slavery in America—also ironically, just as England presented itself as the champion of the anti-slavery movement, when the slave trade ceased to be a good business and its own parliament proposed replacing them with "consumers of unnecessary things," that is, wage slaves.[46]

When, in the mid-17th century, the flood of manufactured goods from Bengal reached its historical peak, the English bourgeoisie and politicians decided, through laws and tariffs, to stop the beating inflicted by the free market by imposing the opposite practice: classical

mercantilism.[xxiii] Naturally, this had a much smaller impact on the production and economy of Indo-Bengal, as their products reached many other ports around the world. In 1756, anticipating the plans of foreign private corporations, the Nawab of Bengal, Siraj-ud-Daulah, ordered the halt of the illegal construction of their fortifications, prompting the British government to proceed with the classic Plan B: military force. In this case, London promoted a military invasion composed of *allies*, a practice that would echo into the 21st century, under different names.

The first invasion attempt was repelled, but a year later, in 1757, the British managed to defeat Siraj-ud-Daulah in the Battle of Plassey, perhaps the most important battle in world history in the last five hundred years. With the triumph of swift horses over slow elephants and, above all, due to the decisive betrayal of General Mir Jafar, the English not only secured the country as a colony (no longer just commercial, but now also political), but also began an intense and persistent destruction of Bengal's industry and later India's, not coincidentally ten years before the date historians consider the start of the Industrial Revolution in England.

As would happen hundreds of times in the history of the Global South, from Latin America to Africa, Siraj-ud-Daulah was executed, and the general who betrayed him, Mir Jafar, was appointed governor. His role was reduced to that of a puppet of the Empire, but for some time he received money from English private companies for his patriotic service against the dictator Siraj-ud.

In the early years of the new English colony, the *successful businessmen* of the East India Company transferred the modern equivalent of billions of dollars from Bengal and India to England to develop industry in the increasingly miraculous Anglo-Saxon empire. By 1760, English industry was very similar to Bengal's, and its machines were as simple as those in India that produced clothing more economically, efficiently, and on a larger scale.[47] With real competition eliminated by the force of cannons, long live free competition—also, by the force of cannons.

[xxiii] In the chapter "Model of Inverse Progression," we mention the difference (and role reversal) between the free market and mercantilism, between feudal corporations (guilds) and the neo-feudal corporations of today (financial corporations). Mercantilism was a system of intervention by imperial states to protect their own economies and destroy those of their colonies with protectionist policies and forced purchases by other countries at gunpoint, as happened in Asia, for example. The free market ended capitalism, and from there, perhaps, Adam Smith's complaint about its absence in Britain.

Once the Industrial Revolution began in England, the domestic market could not absorb the excess production, so the deindustrialized colonies were forced to consume English products. A perfect business. The first was Bengal, which accelerated the destruction of its prosperous industry, the decline of its trade, and, ultimately, the destruction of the entire economy of that country and the extermination of tens of millions of people due to famines caused by the civilized British Empire until just before World War II. The once prosperous India followed the same process of deindustrialization and growing misery that we still associate with those countries today. According to Shombit Sengupta, British policies and practices of "*divide and rule created divisions between Hindus and Muslims in Bengal, which persist in the corners of all of India to this day*."[48]

It was only after 1779 that English industry was able to produce goods as good as those of Bengal. This was not only due to improvements in spinning machines but also to an aggressive tariff policy that lasted a hundred years and to direct (economic, political, and military) intervention in the colonies of Asia. The policy was clear: destroy the competition, force the colonies to open their markets while Europe closed theirs, and compel them to abandon their own industrial development to focus on monoculture in favor of European metropolises for the benefit of trade and the development of their own industry. All in the name of the free market, which not only included protective tariffs and the imposition of commercial openness through cannons and rifles but also the discontinuation of a centuries-old tradition of adopting discoveries and inventions from different parts of the world.

In 1939, Joseph Schumpeter, referring to looms, understood that "*the industrial history of England from 1778 to 1842 can be summarized as the history of a single industry*," but later historians would observe that, in reality, the capital accumulated by English industry was rather small compared to the rest of its economy, and the industrial contribution to the historical growth of the British economy was more due to its foreign trade.[49] That is, to the imposition by military force of its ideology of the "free market" and its extractive economy. At that time, while prosperity, development, and technological advances spread throughout Western Europe, a third of French foreign trade came from the exploitation of slaves in Haiti, a tiny half of an island in the Caribbean.

When historians emphasize the advantage of English industries over those of India and Bangladesh to explain the decline of the latter two,

they systematically fail to mention that not only did powerful English and Dutch private companies operate freely in these Asian countries, but the armies and gunboats of European countries always appeared whenever conditions did not favor the business of their nationals. Exactly the same thing the United States would do in its backyard (the rest of the world) long before displacing Britain as the arrogant, brutal, and racist world empire.

They omit that there was nothing remotely resembling Asian companies and navies, whether Chinese, Indian, or Bangladeshi, harassing, bombarding European ports, and imposing their conditions for a better and freer market. As if it were just a detail—systematically silenced.

The gestation of Anglo-Saxon capitalism

WE WILL FOCUS ON THE MATERIAL, social, ideological, and institutional conditions that gave birth to capitalism, but first we must consider two other dimensions:

(I) One (we will see in the last part) is the dogmatic nature of a dominant system that is transmitted like any religious dogma: through sermons, relentless proselytism, and permanent evangelization.

This occurs, above all, through three sources of religious power: (a) one, religion itself, particularly Protestant-Calvinist religion, because that is its language and psychological precondition; (b) another, secular media, from newspapers, radio, television, and digital media; (c) the third are the clerics of economics, particularly economists of the Austrian School, for whom even Keynesians (moderate capitalists) are mere propaganda, while they define themselves (with a broad smile or a wide-eyed gaze) as the "true economists" who understand "the only possible economy," the real economy based on the nature of the market. Not coincidentally, this arrogance is often accompanied by a histrionics and obviousness more typical of Protestant preachers than academics. It doesn't matter if they drown in a sea of contradictions in principle: the dogmatists of the free market and the absolute and unrestricted freedom of the individual reject mathematical formulas in economics while considering their theories an explanation "of reality," tested in "thought

experiments" and not the "fantasies of other schools of economics." For their preaching to work, they must exclude from their models of "individual freedom" and "market freedom" any possible tyranny of empires and corporations, to name just two elements of the complex reality. They also assume that capitalism is part of "nature" and not a set of dogmas and realities created by humans, which has existed for a brief historical period and will cease to exist like any other previous system. But the arrogance of the believer is one of the elements of reality creation that they claim to analyze *objectively*.

The (II) second dimension that must be considered to explain the birth of capitalism is the *cultural* dimension in its deepest sense. It would suffice to compare the socioeconomic paradigm of the American peoples before the arrival of Europeans with the Renaissance paradigm of capitalism. We could also compare the capitalist paradigm with the African one (Ubuntu, Nri) or the Asian one, more specifically with Hinduism and Buddhism (something we did in the 1997 essay collection, *Critique of Pure Passion*). In short, for classical economics (for the Anglo-Celtic mindset), the problem of "resource scarcity" is the original sin that must be solved by providing resources. But *human nature is selfish*, and therefore this potential must be unleashed for the collective good, as articulated by Adam Smith in the late 18th century, which became dogma to this day, reaching its pathological climax with economists like Hayek and Friedman and writers like Ayn Rand, for whom altruism is an immorality because it goes against "human nature." Later, we will see that this limited and arbitrary definition of "human nature" not only contradicts other Western philosophies and misinterprets Darwinism but also contradicts more recent scientific studies.

In contrast, the Hindu and Buddhist tradition emphasizes caring for others to reduce the constituent pain of the world (the Anglo-Celtic scarcity), in which the individual is immersed. This civilizational philosophy explains other historical realities. For example, the mercantilist, utilitarian, warlike, colonialist, and violent obsession of the Northwest in the last four centuries in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. Except for periods of conflict, often with extra-economic motivations, wars and invasions in Africa and Asia were very rare. Amerigo Vespucci was surprised that in the New World, people were not only very healthy and hygienic but also did not wage war out of ambition. Violence in China and India was, for the most part, imported by Europeans. It could also explain part of the high

rates of civil violence in the American continent, in contrast to Asia and Africa.

When I write "Northwest," it is inevitable to observe the current geopolitical and ideological coincidence of NATO militarism. Before China emerged as a new economic power, Washington and London were already planning an expansion of NATO to Ukraine to "contain" the new threat of Russia, no longer communist but capitalist. When, after the disappearance of the Soviet Union, Poland fell into a deep economic crisis, Western banks, with Washington's approval, rushed to its rescue. It worked. The fear was that Poland might fall into the orbit of a resurgent Russia. On the contrary, when the new Russia was in free fall and part of the neoliberal vulture feast, Washington refused to accept a similar proposal from economist Jeffry Sachs to help stabilize Russia.[xxiv]

During the tragic years of the Black Death in the 14th century, food and workers in the fields became scarce in Europe. In fact, one of the possible causes of the Little Ice Age may have been a significant decrease in population in Europe, Asia, and America from this century until the Industrial Revolution. As a result, in Europe, there was more land available, and shortly after, with the progressive increase in population, greater pressure for new forms of food production began, and incomes started to rise. Europe consolidated its condition as an archipelago of different peoples forced to negotiate and see the other as a permanent threat. The atomization of kingdoms inherited from feudalism also encountered the

[xxiv] The objective becomes even clearer when reading, around the same time, an article by Jimmy Carter's former National Security Advisor and architect of Islamic terrorism in Afghanistan against the USSR, Zbigniew Brzezinski, who established a timeline for NATO expansion, which included Ukraine in its final phase. "*Without Ukraine, Russia will not be a Eurasian empire*," he wrote in 1996. (Larrabee, Stephen. "Ukraine's Place in European and Regional Security." Harvard Ukrainian Studies, vol. 20, 1996, pp. 249–70.) According to Brzezinski, Ukraine's integration into NATO would occur in the second decade. (Brzezinski, Z. "The Cold War and Its Aftermath". *Foreign Affairs*, September 1992.) Not coincidentally, in 2014 Washington supported the coup d'état in favor of the privatization of Ukraine's fertile lands and as a way to contain Russia, which started a long conflict that, for the same reasons, ended in a new war. "The Chinese threat" emerged before any threat from China, beyond its own economic success. In May 2023, former British Prime Minister Liz Truss, who during her campaign had stated that she would use nuclear bombs in Russia if necessary, called for the use of "economic NATO" to confront China. The same Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Celtic obsession: anyone not under our control is our enemy. Naturally, sooner or later the enemy will arm itself against this psychopathology and will be blamed for being "a threat to the peace and freedom of the world." As it has been for centuries, the objective is the same and responds to the Anglo-Celtic-capitalist pathology: to allow no competition.

particularity of a continent crisscrossed by rivers and surrounded by multiple seas, islands, and peninsulas that stimulated trade with other continents. The persistent instability of its borders and its many wars and internal conflicts are proof of this economic, political, and cultural dynamic that shaped the capitalist character.

I believe these geographical characteristics also explain the subsequent and most important stage of capitalism: imperialism. If we look at each of the conflicts, periods of war, and economic prosperity, we will observe a pattern that repeats itself from Europe to the American continent, passing through India and China. In recent centuries, the world's population concentrated not only along rivers but also along seas and oceans. This particularity drove the needs and power of small countries like the Netherlands and England in Europe, and later, after 1890, the United States. At the same time, it forced powerful countries with less developed navies to suffer under the dictatorship of the Northwestern empires, as was the case with Latin America, India, and China, from the wars of the East India Company to the Opium Wars in China, through which a much smaller kingdom like Britain could subjugate a giant country with the force of its gunboats and systematic bombings of important coastal cities in China that did not want to buy anything from the British.

Aside from its geographical particularities (demographic and psychological), Europe's contact with the Islamic world (at the time, the "first world," the developed world) brought exotic ideas, such as the *analysis* against *authority*; commerce, not as a demonic activity but as part of human nature. In a brief period, commercial activity began to grow in some regions of Europe, and as an inevitable consequence, a continuous fluctuation between the tolerance of humanists and the rejection of diversity by the inquisitors. First in Italy and shortly after in the Netherlands. For obvious reasons, a period of growth and change also began, which was radicalized with the fall of the Eastern Roman Empire at the hands of the Turkish Sultan Mehmed II and, consequently, with the flight of humanists from Constantinople to Italy in 1453.

Various historians have observed an accelerated population increase in each period that, like Paul Gallagher, they call *renaissances*, from China to Europe, passing through the Muslim world.[50] But, more than the cause, the Industrial Revolution can and should be considered a consequence of these demographic changes in Europe, along with other factors such as the humanism received from the margins of Europe, mercantilism,

the change in land ownership systems in England, extractive colonialism in the rest of the continents, the accumulation of capital, the commodification of institutions and human existence, and, centuries later, an incipient idea of hygiene in what was until then a pestilent Europe—by the early 19th century, hygiene would become the main factor in the recovery of Europeans' life expectancy, lost for centuries during capitalism and industrialization.

These are the antecedents of capitalism, sporadically acknowledged by academic historiography, but they do not fully explain the logic of its birth. As we will see later, *trade is not the beginning of capitalism*, as it existed for thousands of years and, by the start of the European Renaissance, was several times larger, more prosperous, and freer in other regions like Asia. Between 1700 and 1800, the GDP of European countries began to rise due to a simple and exponential combination: (1) *demographic growth*; (2) the *unlimited exploitation of overseas colonies*; and (3) their own *industrial development*, a consequence of several factors, including the imperial exploitation of colonies and the destruction of trade and industries in the new colonies.

At the same time that these three factors made possible one of the necessary conditions for the emergence of capitalism (the accumulation of surplus capital), those same factors collapsed, were interrupted, or reversed in the rest of the world as part of the same process. For the rest of the world, the White Plague was worse and more deadly than the Black Plague was for Europe. Hundreds of millions of people (some estimates suggest far more than a billion) belonging to "inferior races" in America, Africa, and Asia were exterminated by the sword and gunpowder, by slavery, by diseases, and, above all, by famines directly caused by capitalist and Eurocentric policies. When not through enslavement and wage exploitation, which not only directly massacred using the new weapons of war but also reduced the life expectancy of those continents by at least a decade. Their free trade was destroyed in the name of the "free market," and their own development processes were interrupted through the coercion of arms, monopolies, military and commercial wars, and, finally, the current national debts.

Trade and markets are human activities that date back to ancient times. Since the Neolithic period, they have signified not only the exchange of goods but also communication between diverse groups that extended beyond the clan, tribe, and nation. In this way, culture, arts,

technology, sciences, and knowledge in general were disseminated, creating conditions for coexistence between different societies most of the time, and for wars at other times. From the 10th century until the beginning of European slave trade, the anti-slavery Kingdom of Nri, which achieved nearly a thousand years of radical pacifism based on the principles of "peace, truth, and harmony," maintained intense domestic trade and trade with other peoples.[xxv] In Europe, it was the 15th-century humanists, immigrants from the Middle East, who trafficked the idea (among many others, such as freedom, the education of children, and the progress of history) that trade was not a diabolical invention but, simply, one of the many human activities necessary for the benefit of societies.[51]

But, as the anthropologist Karl Polanyi observed, at the beginning of capitalism, trade and markets did not compete with each other; they were complementary. The idea that capitalism emerged from the market and the freedom of the market is a dogma that has survived for a couple of centuries. Before capitalism began its economic and institutional changes in England, the market was much stronger and freer in many other parts of the world, not only in the Netherlands and Italy but also in Asia. During the last centuries of the Middle Ages, the size of Africa's economy surpassed that of Europe. By 1500, when trade began to expand in Europe and gold and silver were already flowing from America, but capitalism had not even shown its fundamental principles, the European economy had doubled that of Africa. But by 1600, Europe's economy barely reached 40 percent of that of China and India and represented only 15 percent of the total world GDP, while China and India were responsible for 65 percent. Britain and the Netherlands not only destroyed the powerful economy of India first and then China through the force of their cannons but also produced hundreds of millions of deaths as a result of the privatization of their lands, the systematic theft of their basic food supplies, and the blockade of their exports.

Due to the superiority of European cannons, China, the other economic superpower of the time, ended up recognizing "the right" of Europeans to "trade freely" in several regions of its southern coast, such as in the province of Canton, while informing the British envoys that it did not

[xxv] The Nri culture, located in what is now Nigeria, shares with the Ubuntu philosophy of the southern part of the continent its collective conception of the individual and its idea of peace and social harmony as superior goals.

need anything produced on that remote island. To impose a favorable trade balance, London resorted to drugs. In fact, Hong Kong was born to facilitate the opium trade. While the English developed a taste for tea, the Chinese were inoculated with opium through a million-dollar black market, that is, an intellectual stimulant for the English and a narcotic for the Chinese.

A reflection of the destruction of an economic superpower through drug addiction can be seen today in the United States with the opioid and fentanyl epidemic, but the scale of destruction achieved in China was several times greater. When Beijing protested against this illegal and illicit activity, the First Opium War broke out in 1839, for which England found a valuable ally in an old adversary, France. Twenty years later, China was forced to cede territories to "free trade" and buy products it neither needed nor wanted. The virtues of capitalist free trade were evident: by 1830, China represented 35 percent of the world GDP, and its per capita income was higher than that of Europe. If Europe surpassed China in anything, apart from its naval power, it was in the rates of illiteracy and infant mortality. After the "liberation war" of opium, China's economy barely reached seven percent of the world total, and 30 million Chinese had died of hunger. As always, the treaties imposed on the loser benefited the imperial powers of the West without any gain for

China but quite the opposite, which made it almost impossible to export its products in the new free market.

In this process of interrupting others' development and enriching oneself, called *development* since President Truman, due to some racial or cultural superiority, it is important to highlight the case of those countries or peoples who were not subjugated by European powers. A clear example is Japan. Due to its insular situation and lack of economic interest, it was not harassed or subjugated in the same way as India and China. The result? Japan is the only example in the region that developed from the mid-19th century to become an empire and, consequently, a final adversary in Asia, ultimately demolished by American bombs at the end of World War II, when the war was already decided in favor of the Allies. A similar pattern can be found in Latin America: those countries or regions like North America, Argentina, and Uruguay, without significant natural resources that could be coveted by the great powers of the time, were forgotten, allowing them to be more independent and, as a result, develop faster than the rest of Latin American countries like Bolivia, Peru, Haiti, and the rest

of the "banana republics," historically brutalized, corrupted, and plundered by the empires of the day due to their resources. In other words, the richer a colonial people, the more violence and poverty they had to endure.

This imbalance would reverse after European (and later American) imperialism exploited and destroyed Asia and Africa. The great leap would come with the genocide in the Americas and the transfer of thousands of tons of gold and silver, as well as fertilizers for the impoverished lands of Europe and other essential consumer goods like sugar, cotton, coffee, bananas, sisal, iron, copper, tin…

In England, peasants displaced to the cities by the aggressive privatization of their communal lands and the deregulation of rent had to sell themselves to the emerging manufacturers. We can suspect that displacement and uprooting are another functional element of capitalist power, something that contrasts radically with the stability of the feudal system. With forced displacements for political or economic reasons, the existence of the worker became precarious, making them more vulnerable and, therefore, more obedient and productive. This practice can be observed from the displacement of peasants in 16th and 17th century England and in the colonies. It can be seen in the constant displacement of Native American peoples and their replacement by workers kidnapped from Africa: the slave had nowhere to flee, and when they did, they fled to an unknown world carrying the proof of their crime on their skin. It can be observed today in Europe and the United States with respect to immigrants, especially illegal immigrants, displaced and expelled from their lands, also and primarily for economic reasons and, in some cases, political ones. These precarious immigrants, due to their legal status, are further precarized by their criminalization and persecution, forcing them to migrate from one state to another, which reinforces the same logic of exploitation in countries proud of their freedom, democracy, justice, and human rights. In this aspect, nothing has changed.

Returning to the origin of the logic of dispossession in England, the migration of peasants expelled from their lands was possible because much of their subsistence was covered by food from Asia that the gold and silver stolen from America (from other displaced and dispossessed people) could buy on the international market. The gold and silver from America were not only a strong investment in the new European industries and their imperial armies (via the Spanish Empire and English pirates), but

they also made it possible for a large part of their population to dedicate themselves to industry instead of agriculture. These metals, which created the imperial currencies, did not remain idle. They continue to work to this day in the great banks to ensure the stability of their developed countries.

For a long time, Spain flooded the world with "currency issuance," that is, with the issuance of the silver Peso (eight *reales*), which for a couple of centuries was the global currency.[xxvi] Just as Washington would print dollars without gold backing starting in 1971 (and now adds electronic zeros to the monetary system), so did the Spanish Crown with the silver from South America and the slave labor of Bolivian and Peruvian indigenous people. The same story of France, Belgium, and other European countries in Africa. This logic not only drove the Industrial Revolution but also the brutal European imperialism of the 18th and 19th centuries, justified by various pseudoscientific theories based on the fantasy of racial superiority and, later in the 20th century, by its elegant substitute: cultural superiority.

In the last two centuries, colonies like those in India and Africa, and neocolonies like Latin America, all destroyed or with their own development processes interrupted, attempted to emulate this "model of success" with catastrophic results due to a simple chronological reason: arriving late means the seat is already taken, so one must settle for the crumbs that remain.

Taken by force, not by the famous free competition. When Britain arrived in India, the textile industry in that country was far more developed than its counterpart in Europe. But it was a competition that neither the British nor the Dutch would tolerate. The champions of the free market always made sure to freely destroy real competition, while selling the narrative of the benefits of "capitalist free competition." Something that remains the norm even today. Beyond the protectionist laws in England and the tariffs imposed on India to ensure its exports didn't compete with those of the marvelous Industrial Revolution, London resorted to its cannons and early coups d'état (like the one in 1757 against Siraj-ud-Daulah)

[xxvi] Jason Hickel, in his book *The Divide*, calculates that if the 100 million kilograms of silver stolen from what is now South America in 1800 (a small fraction of the total, not to mention the tons of gold) had been invested at a five percent interest rate (i.e., the historical average, nothing arbitrary), in today's value, those plundered countries would have an extra income of 165 trillion dollars. That is, double the GDP of the entire world. (Hickel, Jason. *The Divide: A Brief Guide to Global Inequality and its Solutions*. Random House, 2017, p. 71.)

to get rid of regimes that didn't understand the freedom of the market. After centuries of bringing the civilization of capitalism to India, the country went from having nearly 30 percent of the world's GDP to a meager and criminal three percent, a misery from which it began to recover very slowly once it achieved independence from the dying empire. When the British were expelled centuries later, Indian industry was reduced to artisanal production, completely out of competition with European and American industries.

For centuries, the imposition of land and water privatization caused tens of millions of deaths in India and Bengal and an even greater enrichment of European coffers. The same happened with the famine in Ireland. The same in the indigenous territories of the United States. The same in Mexico, during the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz at the end of the 19th century, with the privatization of land and its modernization in service of American companies, which also produced a national catastrophe that ended in the bloody and tragically necessary Mexican Revolution of 1910. The late industrialization of Brazil in the 1930s and Argentina in the 1940s also ended badly, partly due to their competitive weakness and, above all, due to the political and military reaction of the creole oligarchies in service of the global system of labor division—and geopolitical power. The same will happen with the wave of privatizations in the Global South, as a condition of international institutions like the IMF for their "loans and bailouts" of neocolonies ruined and indebted by friendly dictatorships—all experiences that ended in catastrophic social crises and repeated cyclically as if the people had ruined their memories through an overdose of need.

The Birth of Capitalism

CAPITALISM WAS NOT BORN WITH THE MARKETS of Italy, as historical dogma repeats, nor even with the powerful Dutch trade, but with the commodification of land in 16th-century England, with the elimination of communal lands, the precarization of rent, the expulsion of peasants to the cities, and, finally, with the imposition of the abstract laws of the market (by the very concrete force of police and armies) on the rest of

institutions, on the rest of human activity, material, psychological, and even spiritual. No miracle called "free market" or "the superior race that invented machines" as the basis and universal recipe for prosperity, but the old coercion of arms first, and capital later. Neither was capitalism founded by Adam Smith, nor did Smith discover the division of labor, something that was common in medieval towns (hence the guilds) and in many other regions of the world, and something that Smith, like Marx later, considered a highly effective and highly dangerous practice for the alienation of individuals.

The free market and free competition were not the causes, much less the consequences, of capitalism. During its birth in England, competition was heavily regulated by governments to prevent a market collapse. By the 16th century, no European state was more unified and centralized than the English Crown. Even later, in 1776, at the height of capitalism's maturation, the very saint of the crusaders for the free market, Adam Smith, in his foundational and massive book *The Wealth of Nations*, complained about the absence of market freedom in Britain (though in this book he never used the slogan "free market"). "*To expect that freedom of trade will be restored in Great Britain is as absurd as to expect that it will be established in Oceania or in Utopia*," he wrote.[52] One might argue that Smith was more radical than his contemporaries and, therefore, was not satisfied. But it is enough to pay attention to the word he uses, "restored" ("*entirely restored in Great Britain*"), to understand that he is referring to a regression in that freedom, to a preexisting, lost freedom, *preexistent*. In ancient Europe, Smith observed, clearly recognizing precapitalist rights that had been lost in his time, "*the occupiers of the land were all tenants at will*." Slavery "*was of a milder kind than that known among the ancient Greeks and Romans, or even in our colonies in the West Indies.* [The peasants] *belonged more directly to the land than to their master. Therefore, they could be sold with it, but not separately… However, they were not capable of acquiring property*."[53] Smith preferred wage laborers to slaves for the same reasons that Britain would outlaw slavery in its colonies in 1833: wage labor is cheaper than traditional slavery. In fact, for Smith, wages would not be the main driver of rising prices and loss of competitiveness, but rather the profits of entrepreneurs. "*In countries that grow richer more quickly, the low rate of profit can compensate for high wages… In reality, high profits are more responsible for the increase in the price of labor than high wages… The price of the commodity due to the increase in wages is in arithmetic proportion… But the profits of all*

entrepreneurs [in the process of production and marketing] *are in geometric proportion*."[54]

The irony lies not only in the fact that the cotton industry in England multiplied the need to expand slavery in the United States, not only did it provoke the annexation of Texas and half of Mexico up to California by that slave-owning country, but in British colonies, such as India, the tragedy multiplied: wage slaves (men and women who, for some mysterious reason, would be classified as "free workers," a significant proportion of whom were children) began to work more and die younger. In fact, between 1880 and 1920, 160 million people died in India due to hunger and exploitation.

Smith was right: England, through its new protectionist laws, through its brutal imperialism over other nations, had developed and enriched itself by practicing the opposite of what it preached for other nations. Seven pages earlier, Smith had established as obvious and as an ideal that "*the interest of a nation… is, like that of any merchant…, to buy cheap and sell as dear as possible*."[55] From there, he describes the scenario of "*the most perfect freedom of trade*" as a relationship between equals, between sovereign states freely deciding what to buy and what to sell without any external coercion. This is the perfect definition of traditional, precapitalist trade, practiced for thousands of years. Capitalist trade will be based on the separation of exchange value from use value (a discovery revisited by Marx), especially applied to land, something that did not exist before, and will make the laws of the market impose themselves on the rest of society through the abstract extortion of the financial market, not personal, as was the case in feudalism. When this extortion is not enough, the power of accumulated capital will use the extortion of national armies. "Market freedom" was a slogan of industrial capitalism later and before reducing this freedom to rubble through coercion and imposition.

But Smith's idealism was not only and is not only a utopia of current capitalists without capital, but, if it had been applied, it would have halted not only the development of Great Britain but also the emergence and international domination of capitalism. Something that, for the benefit of the developed center, occurred in the colonies and in the capitalist republics of Africa and Latin America.

The historian Polanyi observed that, during the Industrial Revolution, it was the European states (the Tudors and the Stuarts) that delayed this process of "free competition," inadvertently preserving the social

fabric that, otherwise, would have collapsed.[56] But things did not change radically since then. The "freedom of the market" was always the freedom of the markets of the colonies; never of the imperial metropolises that preached it. This is why the call for the colonized to resemble what are now called developed countries by imposing market freedom as a doctrine, ideology, and system in their republics is not a new paradox, but an old practice, functional to the development of the now-called hegemonic metropolises, to avoid the word imperialism.

As historian Ellen Meiksins Wood observed, "*a 'market economy' can only exist in a 'market society,' that is, in a society that conforms to the laws of the market rather than the market conforming to it*."[57] The adjective "free" in the slogan "free market" does not mean the freedom of individuals but the freedom of markets. Since there are no longer doctrines promoting slavery in the name of freedom, as in the 19th century, the narrative shift had to identify "freedom of the markets" with "freedom of individuals." Now, if an individual is subjected to the freedom of the market, it is difficult to define them as free but rather as a slave or, at least, as a new vassal. Unless, of course, they are a noble, a master, or a millionaire—the true owners of the freedom of the markets.

Based on the historical data we possess, we can speculate that the great difference between societies *with* markets and the current societies *of* markets that gave rise to capitalism as we know it today was essentially built by nine factors:

1) FRAGMENTATION. The geographical and political fragmentation of European feudalism first and the centralization of monarchies (absolutist and parliamentary) later. That is, proto-liberal feudalism and proto-imperial monarchy, both fused in an ideological embrace called capitalism.

2) NEW PARADIGM. The paradigm shift from an enchanted nature, that of the Middle Ages, to a dead, material nature of the Renaissance, was the necessary foundation for other radical changes, from the Protestant ethic of Calvinism to the conception of nature (including savages) as a commodity and an opportunity for mercantilist exploitation.

3) ACCUMULATION. A process of radical accumulation of wealth (first mercantile, then industrial, and finally financial) derived from the dispossession of producers (national and international) through an abstract system rebranded as *economy* and *market*.

4) ABSTRACTION. The accumulation of wealth in the Middle Ages (land, labor, gold) continued in Capitalism but in an abstract, intangible, and invisible form and, therefore, more difficult to resist or question. Who can fight against money, which is the very blood of existence? The *use value* and the *exchange value* (defined by Aristotle and central to liberal and Marxist economics) separated until the latter dominated the former. The right to land ownership ceased to be linked to labor and became a *right of capital accumulation*. The rules of the market imposed themselves on production and the rest of human existence—and on all of nature. From *freedom in the market* we moved to *freedom of the market*, from *free trade* to *free commerce*.

5) ANXIETY. The development of a psychological state based on anxiety, instability, and existential uncertainty fueled economic competition and laid the foundation for the (obsessive) work ethic of Protestantism. This factor was articulated with Calvinist theology and ethics but became structural shortly after, with the systematic dispossession of private and communal lands in 15th-century England and, more significantly, in the following two centuries. By the 17th century, this practice and its laws created in England a mass of tenants and vagabonds that led to the Industrial Revolution, the brutality of imperial slavery, and continued with the precarity of employment in the 20th century and its narratives of efficiency, productivity, and economic success.

6) FANATICISM. The development of Calvinist fanaticism legitimized the pursuit of wealth at any cost, turned a sin into a virtue, and divorced morality from faith. Not only had nature died, but the inferior races had no soul or spirit, and thus could be conquered and exploited in the name of God, economic gain, and civilization. From then on, genocide and the accumulation of wealth

ceased to be obstacles on the path to eternal salvation if the one committing the act was driven by love for the true God. Two atomic bombs on Japan, a massacre in Korea or Vietnam were justified if done in the name of the correct faith. This religious fanaticism was not entirely new, but the sanctity of *improvement* (material gain) and the irrelevance of morality in the face of faith, was.

7) IMPERIALISM. The new global imperialism exploited its colonies worldwide thanks to the new materialist paradigm and religious fanaticism (first of the Iberian Catholics and later of the Anglo-Saxon Protestants) and interrupted the development of continents like Africa, Latin America, and other global centers of economic activity, such as Asia. Initially, it relied on military brutality and technological superiority, specializing in the extraction of foreign resources (like a spider sucking nutrients from its flies, most often with the fanatical approval of the flies) and perpetuated itself for generations through the media—complement and, at times, substitutes for the Bible.

8. MONEY AND FAITH. No civilization was based solely on barter, but on some form of money. From its origins in Mesopotamia, money was, at the same time, credit, debt, and likely the origin of writing. However, both an individual's relationships with the material future were within their existential horizon. When individual debts became a social problem, the ruler of the time would cancel all debts with a stroke of the pen, a practice that was a tradition since biblical times. Capitalism radicalized the abstraction and unattainable complexity of money by separating it from any material standard (like the dollar in 1971, abandoning the gold standard for easier and more immediate theft from producers). If at some point finance depended on the economy, now it is the opposite. Banks only possess ten percent of the money they lend. They lend others' debts (turning others' debts into their own capital) assuming a future that, when it does not meet the expectations of the financial system or some major investor cannot control their panic, massive economic crises occur.

9. ECONOMIC CRISES. Social and economic crises are old companions of humanity. However, before capitalism, economic and social crises were due to concrete catastrophes: a plague, a war, a volcanic eruption, a long drought, a hurricane, a flood… It was capitalism that invented social crises originating from the frequent contradictions of its own economic system. Neoliberalism took this phenomenon of economic crises to financial crises, where any monetary error or excessive ambition of its feudal lords could produce a tsunami of layoffs and the destruction of the strongest economies on the planet. Thus, for example, the Great Recession of 2008 originated in the U.S. housing system (subprime mortgage crisis) and spread to the rest of the world as if, overnight, someone had set fire to millions of houses that, in reality, only went from being occupied by families to being vacant—paradoxically, among many other serious problems, abandonment led to a lack of maintenance and real degradation in many houses.

Abstraction, privatization, change, and continuity

HUMANS ARE A PRODUCT of history, and in history, there are never absolute ruptures but continuities in other forms. We could say that in deep history, nothing is created; everything is transformed. For example, the Civil War in the United States produced significant changes in the legal recognition of some rights for Black men and women, but it is not difficult to observe a survival of the ideology of the defeated Confederacy in the very Union they sought to break. Not only did the constitutional racism of the Southern slaveholders survive and spread throughout the rest of the country and later to the neocolonies of U.S. imperialism, but the masters, their brotherhoods, and their repressive militias became the elites of large corporations, while the demonized slaves became wage laborers, the representatives of the danger to the sacred order of God and the Market.

This observation arises not only from considering the two seemingly contradictory systems in their entirety (the slave-based and the corporate, both rooted in capitalist accumulation) but also from their cultural expressions, which are always evolving to adapt to the ethical and aesthetic

sensibilities of each era while surviving in their foundational principles. It is enough to recall that the famous phrase proudly sung and repeated by Americans, "*the land of the free and the home of the brave*," is a verse derived from the national anthem. The lyrics were not only written by Francis Scott Key, a slaveholder like nearly all the powerful landowners of his time, but his poem also reveals more than it explicitly states. The third stanza, tactfully omitted in more recent versions, proudly proclaims:

> *No refuge could save the hireling and slave*
> *From the terror of flight or the gloom of the grave,*
> *And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave*
> *O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave*

Here, not only does *brave* rhyme with *slave*, but it becomes clear that by the early 19th century, a slave and a wage worker had something in common, aside from being objects of contempt: "*No refuge could save the hireling and slave/From the terror of flight or the gloom of the grave* (No refuge could save the wage worker and the slave/From the terror of flight or the gloom of the grave)."

The history of the birth of capitalism in England, marked by the dispossession of peasants through land privatizations and the imposition of market rules on the rest of society in the 17th century, was replicated in the colonies that supplied raw materials, though with the opposite outcome. The colonies in the rest of the world were to the dispossessed peasants what England had been to them. In both cases, state coercion emerged to ensure the accumulation of capital by a minority class. But if this dispossession and accumulation had a face during the Middle Ages, in the new capitalist order it became an abstract power, called *economy*, *market*, and *law of supply and demand*, against which it was much harder to fight, both physically and intellectually.[xxvii]

[xxvii] In 2002, we published "The Theology of Money" with these same concepts: "*In the past, a vassal was bound to his lord by an oath. Breaking the rules could mean a blow to the peasant's head. For the unfortunate one, the symbolic element was not the stick, but the King or the Lord who expressed his will in the form of an order. The Lord represented both protection and punishment. Still, the unjust social relationship was still person-to-person: the peasant could see the Lord; he could even kill him, with a stick just as sturdy as the one used against him. The relationship that binds us to Money today is entirely abstract. In this, our society resembles that of the Middle Ages: we fear a symbolic and invisible entity, just as men feared God a thousand years ago. Stock market values change without our participation.*

This process of abstraction was a process of multiple separations: it separated the peasant from the land; the worker from their labor; the church from the government; religious law from civil law; art from religion and politics… The progressive separation and abstraction of various aspects of human life meant that each individual navigated and lived in multiple spheres simultaneously. As in any previous system, a minority of society and of the dominant countries controlled and accumulated power over these diverse spheres through capital and coercive forces, such as the police and the military (whose new paradigm was the *machine* and the dehumanization of the soldier), which are, in turn, the result of their own abstractions: in theory, their professionalization separated them from politics, religion, and any particular government. In practice, the power of money reconnected them to the owners of money.

Another historical continuity occurred in the process of subjugating neighboring fiefdoms until they became an empire, all facilitated by the abstraction of the market and money, which projected the coercive power of the victor beyond the reach of the feudal lord's arm. In the new system, *the old feudal lord became the liberal capitalist* thanks to this abstraction and the impersonal freedom of the new coercive power. Capitalism separated politics from the state in a medieval, personal sense and projected feudalism onto the rest of the world. Coercion was concentrated in the central state (police, armies) while its beneficiaries advocated for regional, corporate, and individual independence. Independence from the state.

First, England became Great Britain by adding Wales and Scotland, and then, with Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom. In the same process of expansion, England did not stop until it had invaded nearly every country in the world and settled to exploit the most lucrative, such as India. Empires proceed through unions while promoting divisions. With their particularities, it was the same case for France, the Netherlands, and the Thirteen American Colonies starting in 1776. In all cases, they proceeded in the same way: once neighboring fiefdoms were annexed, they projected themselves onto the rest of the world, not only with colonies directly administered by European governments, not only with

---

Between these values and us lies a theology of money called 'economics,' which generally tries to rationally explain something that has no more reason than symbolic power". (*La República*, Bitácora. Montevideo, November 6, 2002)

protectorates, but with the empire of their private corporations, of a charter nature (private companies with military and economic support from the states) as was the case with the Dutch West India Company, the English East India Company, the African ventures of Belgium and France, or American corporations like the United Fruit Company or the Standard Oil Company, to name a few.

Another continuity through mutation can be seen in the path that led feudalism to reproduce itself in the slaveholding fiefdoms of the Americas. This new transmutation of feudalism became the liberal ideology that pitted feudal lords against the absolute state, against the monarchy, and later entrepreneurs, corporations, and federalists against centralism, against the power of the modern state. As in all cases, the elite of power in each regime always distrusted or opposed the centralized power of states, whether monarchies or democracies, while using them to their advantage, especially because coercion was exercised through the police, national armies within the colonies, and imperial armies over the colonies. If in the 19th century the dichotomy was liberals against monarchist conservatives, by the 20th century liberals and neoliberals had become the conservative dogma and, in any case, formed alliances with the power of the moment: with monarchies, military dictatorships, and liberal democracies dominated by megacorporations, whether national (Europe, the United States) or international (banana republics, colonies).

In this political orgy and ideological cross-dressing that arises when observing the last thousand years since the Middle Ages, the same logic always persists: (1) accumulation of power by an elite and (2) financial and state coercion, along with sermon-propaganda from that power against those below.

The conflict will always arise from the dialectical pair *justice/power*. A smaller or larger part of those marginalized from power, those who must suffer the exploitation of each system, will resist power and, from time to time, rebel. In some cases, they will produce armed revolutions and, in others, progressive revolutions. In all cases, they will not only encounter resistance from the status quo of power but will also face violent reactions (dictatorships) or progressive ones (ideological and cultural propaganda from within democratic systems).

Before becoming a new, more radical feudalism, as financial capitalism is today, primitive capitalism and, above all, the circulation of money had achieved a certain democratization in the middle class by

eroding the feudal aristocracy based on direct blood ties. But it also radicalized the dispossession of the rights of those below from the beginning, as we will see later, with deregulation, privatization, and the dispossession of communal lands in the 16th century in Europe and later in the Americas, a practice that continues today as the transfer of small and medium landowners to large agricultural capitals.[xxviii]

Money was an abstraction that enabled new generations to access rights and privileges denied to their parents. The *snobs* (students who were children of shoemakers) began to access universities. After a few centuries, the system reproduced the pattern of previous systems (studied exhaustively by Walter Scheidel in his book *The Great Leveler,* 2017): the progressive accumulation of social wealth in an almost invisible minority until that unequal order ends with one of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: war, revolution, state collapse, and pandemics.[58]

But direct and legal blood ties were not completely abolished. In capitalist societies (post and neo-feudal), blood ties continue in the system of family inheritances and social clubs of all kinds (including elite universities).[xxix] What is different? Above all, the representation of society is different. Different from the Middle Ages and, especially since the 16th century, capitalist society represents itself as a free society, just as the slaveholding society that served it during the 19th century represented itself. On the material side, there is another difference. The coercion of the dominant minority over the rest no longer resides solely in the force of arms but, to a large extent, is a replacement of the abstraction of God and the

[xxviii] In recent decades, it has been argued that land concentration makes food production more efficient, but various reports, including those from the UN, indicate the opposite effect, as it creates market insecurity. Without considering that the reduction of hunger in the world is largely due to a change in methodology for measuring it: for the FAO and the UN, the necessary calories refer to people with sedentary jobs, a minority in poor countries. According to a study by the University of Virginia, the accumulation of land in Africa and Asia for export crops and biofuels is responsible for keeping populations malnourished and hungry. ("*Food appropriation through large scale land acquisitions*" Maria Cristina Rulli and Paolo D'Odorico. Department of Environmental Sciences, 2014.) On the other hand, without resorting to these policies, China dramatically reduced hunger in the 1990s by supporting small farmers.

[xxix] Elite universities, such as Harvard University or Imperial College London, often accumulate Nobel Prizes and highly valuable researchers for the simple reason of economic power. However, from a pedagogical perspective, the differences between these universities and mid-tier ones are very minor, if not nonexistent. The social differences, however, are significant. The greatest advantage of sending children to elite universities lies in what we could summarize as "influence clubs," for which parents often pay annually as much as the full salary of an average professional.

church as an abstract power with invisible laws: the *economy* and the *market*. This order, these abstract laws (intangible but more filled with politics and ideology than their supposed scientific laws), cannot be violated without the entire system suffering, leading to insecurity, isolation (blockade), and poverty for those experiments that attempt to question it.

Even at the height and maturity of the Commercial Revolution in 17th-century France, peasants could visualize the power of the state that pressured them through taxes and the direct coercion of force. The peasants and the French bourgeoisie, who had a much more stable tax system than the English, could identify the power that extracted their surplus value. Their English counterparts had to face a more abstract and invisible power called the *market*, suffering not only the extraction of part of their production by landlords who progressively stripped them of the communal lands that, for centuries, represented a relief from poverty or the loss of their lands. The English peasants, stripped of their lands and the communal lands, had to compete with others in the same condition for access to the rent of privatized land.

In this sense as well, the new system, capitalism, was more brutal than feudalism. In feudalism, the peasant enjoyed the "right to inhabit" the land where he and his family were located. The feudal lord could not expel him from his land unless the peasant committed a capital crime, such as murder or theft. When the land was sold or transferred to another feudal lord, the peasants had the right to remain where they were. Unlike the slave, *peasants could not be sold as private property* separate from the land.

The new capitalist rent system eliminated that right. Moreover, the tenant lost his right to a fixed rent (*firm*, firm, fixed; *farm*, farmer), which was replaced by a variable and unstable rent set by the fluctuating market. The tenant and his land were separated in a new process of abstraction that only increased the economic and psychological instability of the now wage worker, stripped of his previous rights to his land and the communal land. In any case, the new concept of "private property" meant, from the beginning, *the right of exclusion*. The new tenant, stripped of his rights and unable to pay his rent, had to migrate to the cities (Manchester, London) where he fueled the industries financed by the gold and silver of the Americas. He became a wage slave, and his fate was left in the hands of the owners of capital, which the press dubbed "the freedom of the market."

From then on, not only did the living conditions (physical, social, and psychological) of the dispossessed peasants, now workers, crumble,

but life expectancy itself also decreased significantly. In contrast, on the other side of the Atlantic, Indigenous nations not only maintained communal property, living conditions that did not force them to work even half as much as European wage laborers, but, on average, they also lived longer and were taller, due to better nutrition, hygiene, and community care. All of which, needless to say, did not last long after the arrival of European progress.

In any case, the power was not only abstract and invisible, but the only visible enemy was formed by other peasants and other workers in the same condition. Competition made them enemies. In the 19th century, slaveholders openly fostered hatred between poor whites, blacks, and Indigenous people. The British did the same in Asia for the same reasons, promoting hatred between Muslims and Hindus that persists to this day. Today, the enemies projected by the hyper-abstraction of a global and inaccessible financial system reproduce the same story in different settings and with minimal variations that appear as novelties: the enemies of poor workers are other poor people, other ethnicities, and immigrant workers from other countries—as dispossessed as the English peasants of the 17th century and by the same system.

Why didn't the dispossessed and the slaves rebel against their masters if they were so much more numerous? Why can't a battalion rebel against its generals if they are so much more numerous? Why can't workers rebel against their bosses if they are so much more numerous? In reality, there were many rebellions, uprisings, and revolutions, and for the same reasons. Almost all of them failed or were absorbed by the very system they supposedly fought against. Power does not lie simply in the whip or in weapons (the means of direct coercion) but in the social system that makes it possible (the means of indirect coercion). The fabric of the capitalist order permeates every community, every country, every institution (religions, education, culture, legal systems, judicial systems, financial systems, media). It is not more natural but much more complex, abstract, and intangible than its predecessors, the feudal system and the slave system. For this reason, it is a structure difficult to dismantle and even harder to replace with other socioeconomic options, even with other conceptions of human existence, from African Ubuntu, American indigenous collectivism, to the most contemporary socialism.

Not one, but the four horsemen of the apocalypse could bring it to its knees. Today, we are already immersed in growing social inequalities and the appropriation of wealth in societies, and we are submerged in the beginning of (1) an environmental catastrophe that will accelerate (2) a social rebellion or revolution that will have to deal with (3) pandemics and (4) wars resulting from the transfer of power from the West (basically, NATO) to the East (China).

With the new means of abstract coercion that govern societies and means of production fragmented by specialization and the division of labor, the power of the dominant minority (the abstract power concentrated in money) began to control production and distribution (the old market) through a market that is presented as an expression of nature, freedom, and the most simplified Darwinism. That market, which was once the lifeblood of knowledge and cultural diversity, is now the new dominant ideology, uniform and simplifying a dying diversity, just when diversity has become an ethical paradigm. In other words, the capitalist market (not of exchange but of control over production and consumption) has become part of the coercion against that very diversity and against the very idea that was its ally for thousands of years. That market, which is no longer at the service of human existence, has colonized humans to make them part of its existence.

The historian Ellen Meiksins Wood observed that capitalism managed to separate economy from politics in the feudal sense of the words, that is, when the power of coercion, taxes, and policies depended on a specific feudal lord.[59] The commodification of land not only separated use value from exchange value (all these separations are processes of abstraction) but the market also separated the power of economic coercion from the fief, projecting it beyond the personal and visible. In other words, it is not that economy and politics had ended their marriage but that the relationship had become more liberal—and promiscuous. When reality becomes unpleasant or inconvenient for the now ubiquitous feudal lord, capital can intimidate, pressure, or flee.

With capitalism, we have reached the moment when the accumulation of expropriation in the name of property and coercion in the name of the market is carried out through the abstract entity of the laws of economics. From a historical and concrete perspective, this new abstraction first focuses on the market of large cities (Florence, Amsterdam), on the commodification of production in the 18th century (England), and later

on the commodification of the rest of human life, from the dehumanization of industrialization in the 19th and 20th centuries to the dehumanization of consumerism in the 21st century.

Monarchies and feudal lords; States and liberals

IN CENTRAL EUROPE, the Renaissance inherited the fragmentation of feudalism, which extended the division of labor, the economy of exchange, trade, non-state accumulation, and laid the foundations for what would later be known as *liberalism*. This logic is not so linear nor free of paradoxes, that is, of apparent contradictions. As historian Ellen Meiksins Wood analyzed, France followed a different path from England for some time. There was no capitalism, not even in the French Revolution of 1789. France had a limited internal market, and its land ownership remained feudal, not capitalist. The bourgeoisie did not fight for a capitalist system. The reaction was against the absolute monarchy, which had first questioned and limited feudal power and then the power of the bourgeoisie, who were feudal lords in transition.[60]

France continued to seduce indigenous America for its non-capitalist aspects, but it shared something with England, Belgium, and the Netherlands: its accumulated power, which soon projected itself onto the rest of the continents to exploit, destroy, and contribute to the development of civilized Europe.

Another fragmentation of opposite character and function occurred later in the continents subjected to the colonial dictates of Europe and the United States, while those same powers, once fragmented by feudalism, the independent cities of Europe, and the slave states in North America, began to consolidate through an inverse process: through annexations, political, territorial, corporate, religious, and ideological unions, all while promoting territorial fragmentation in peripheral countries and the demobilization (another form of fragmentation) of their workers within borders. In both cases, media and cultural propaganda were decisive for this improbable cohesion of contradictory fragments—cohesion always in favor of accumulated power.

The imperialist union, a concentration of economic and military power, was also, and above all, an accumulation of capital and territory; it was ideological cohesion based on the myths of the *Chosen People of God*, of *Manifest Destiny*, of the *superiority of the white race*, and of other universal excuses like *Freedom*, *Democracy*, and the *Free Market*. On the other side (the side below), the fragmentation of the colonies served to weaken their geopolitical power and perpetuate their submission and dependence as new vassals, new lackeys, and new peoples subdued by the undeniable brute force of the new world order*: a system of global feudalism*, whose lords and nobles became the financial elite, and the former vassals became slaves, first, and then wage laborers. That is, cheap and brutalized labor for extractivist societies of raw materials needed in the North.

This private dominion of the new feudal lords has never ceased to be in permanent conflict and association, in a love-hate relationship, with central governments. This was the case with the old feudal lords turned liberals starting in the 16th century with the commodification of land in England; in the 17th century with the first theorizations of a distinguished landowner as a philosopher, John Locke; in the 18th century with Adam Smith; in the 20th century with the neoliberals; and in the 21st century with the so-called libertarians—in all cases, the word *freedom* and all its derivatives were systematically emphasized.

When capitalism emerged in England, the feudal lords were against the loss of *their* freedoms and privileges at the hands of the new monarchies. But the vassal and the peasant, once tied to the land, had now lost their feudal rights and revolted, attacking the enclosure of communal lands, the new market-based lease system, and the evictions enforced by the repressive power of the central government. In response, both the monarchy and the feudal lords themselves, once and future adversaries in theory, formed a new class alliance. The new feudal lords took charge of business and profits, and the English state (and later all other states) took charge of repression and losses when things went wrong.

This also happened in India with the champions of private enterprise like the Dutch West India Company and the English East India Company starting in 1600, and later in all European colonies across the continents, with the exception of Antarctica. The British colonies on the Atlantic coast of North America were, in fact, private companies, like the Virginia Company of London established in 1606 with shareholders from London, which is why it is no surprise that the flag of the United States is

almost a copy of the East India Company's. These companies were governed by mixed stock systems, like today's *charter* schools and businesses, where the private corporation benefits economically from government assistance while claiming its freedom as a private enterprise.[xxx]

From there, as Adam Smith himself suggested much later, the real free market ended, and the narrative of the free market began. The free market came to mean *the freedom of capitalists* to decide and extract profits from others while their governments harassed, repressed, or massacred with their new weapons and powerful armies and marines those who didn't understand what was going on. The same story as slavery in the Americas. In the name of freedom and free enterprise, the neo-feudal slaveholders monopolized businesses, supported by their own slave militias (the precursors to the police in the United States), with the government's army and marines in more serious and interesting cases, such as the expropriation of vast indigenous and Mexican territories throughout the 19th century. The same logic during the era of "banana republics" in the Caribbean and Central America and the wars and repression in almost every part of the world.

In all cases, the state, the government (the former monarchy, now the result of elections held as democratic), played a more than fundamental role in the success of *entrepreneurs*: it fulfilled a crucial and decisive role. This logic was also repeated within empires. Champions of economic liberalism and neoliberalism in the 20th century, like Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman, supported dictatorships in Latin America, such as Pinochet's Chile, as a necessary condition for the success of their liberal and market freedoms. Friedman himself explained the Great Depression of the United States in the 1930s not as a crisis or imbalance between supply and demand, not as a result of the liberal and capitalist policies of previous decades nor due to the excess credit given by banks to insolvent businesses, but as a monetary issue. For Friedman, "*money is the most important commodity*" and, in the case of the Great Depression of the 1930s, everything boiled down to a *mismatch* between money and credit, which

[xxx] It is very difficult to translate the word *charter* widely used today in the United States to refer, for example, to *charter schools* (private, for-profit primary and secondary schools with government funding), but an approximation would be "lease or exploitation rights" of a business—understanding business in the broad sense of the word in English, as any activity that generates profits, benefits, *improvement*. Something similar was the vassalage system of the *encomiendas* that the Spanish exported to America. From the mid-16th century onward, the encomiendas were replaced by the payment of taxes by the natives.

is regulated by the price of credit, that is, by interest rates. Therefore, the blame for the Great Depression was that the government miscalculated its monetary policy. This simplistic explanation and these economic theories became influential and, despite their massive failures, continue to thrive proudly due to the success of the world's hegemonic power, based on the centralized power of the U.S. government, and the economic, ideological, and military defeat of any other way of being, of existing. In other words, it's not just that when things go well it's thanks to free enterprise and when they go wrong it's the government's fault, but, according to the champions of market freedom and capitalist free enterprise, *the government is the ultimate arbiter of the success or failure* of an entire economy and its social order. Even so, the dogma tirelessly repeats that the perfect state of the free market is one where no human intervention interferes with its *natural laws*. That is, a market and an economy free of human beings, a utopia that leaves any communist utopia speechless, but in the name of reality, freedom, and other nice things always administered by some elite of the chosen.[xxxi]

The logic of the crown rescuing feudal lords, of the power of central (imperial) governments rescuing liberals and the free market, rhymed with London's policy for Asia, Lisbon's, Amsterdam's, Paris's, and Brussels's for Africa, Washington's for Latin America, and, in all cases, later for the rest of the world. By the late 19th century, Washington's well-known *Gunboat Diplomacy* had been replaced by *Dollar Diplomacy*, that is, the policy of lending easy dollars to poor countries, but with interest, knowing they couldn't pay their debts, after which the marines invaded and occupied various countries in the backyard again and again. All of which led to the creation of the so-called Banana Republics. Was there anything more planned, centralized, and state-driven than the capitalism of empires, that is, of developed nations?

The relationship *feudal lord-monarchy* is repeated in today's hyper-technological world, more than evident. In early 2023, Elon Musk, the world's richest man and a prominent example of neo-feudal capitalism, accused the Davos Forum of becoming "*an unelected world government that people never asked for and never wanted*."[61] As if the new feudal lords (like

[xxxi] Since 1954, the Bilderberg Club has gathered annually and in secret a hundred powerful members of the ultra-wealthy club, kings, and major investors. The club's motto is "to promote the free market" through ideas and strategies from speakers and experts that its select attendees are forbidden to quote.

Musk) had been elected by any people. The same residue of the feudals against the new monarchies of the 17th and 18th centuries. Opposed to both, a part of the 18th-century bourgeoisie emerged, like the current left, in opposition to the ultra-millionaire lords, owners of others' lives, and the political powers concentrated in unelected monarchies, such as the Davos Forum, the IMF, and a few others.

Fiefdoms, corporations, and liberal democracies

FOLLOWING THE DIAGRAM OF INVERSE PROGRESSION, let's summarize the alternating continuity of the political and economic power structure of the last few centuries. The current post-capitalism reproduces the historical structure of feudalism but without the emphasis on land ownership.

Now the fiefdoms are the corporations, and the feudal lords are their owners, with their court composed of CEOs (dukes, counts, marquises), their shareholders (knights, nobility; bankers, merchants), and the dominant media (high and low clergy; priests and nuns). This same feudal structure calcified in 17th-century capitalism with the radicalization of super private companies and their extension into the international arena, such as the East India Company or the Virginia Company, where the power of the crown (the central government) was reduced to the monopoly of armed coercion for the benefit and rescue of these private companies, a combination of the democratic system of pirates (the most brutal empires of the Modern Era were democracies) and the later liberals.

This power structure was reproduced in modern and postmodern republics. In the same way that the executive, legislative, and judicial powers are separated (in theory, not in practice) and organized by an electoral system, the system of private democracy of the pirates and the *company* privileges the group with economic power, called since 1600, shareholders. Always, whenever possible, *with the help and without the interference* of central governments.

In their internal structure, today's large companies and corporations reproduce this republican model—or it's the other way around. They have owners (feudal lords), CEOs (Prime Ministers), a board with voting power (the congresses), who are elected by the shareholders (in liberal

democracies, "the people," who more often than not have been limited by law to a minority group and, later, after the universalization of the vote, have been under the pressure and power of propaganda and dictatorial institutions like international banks. In companies and corporations, users, consumers, workers have zero voice and vote in the labor, productive, and consumer dynamics that surround them. It is the shareholders who vote, and their votes depend on the number of shares they own. That is, whoever has more economic power has more political power. In corporations, this is a reality written in stone; in liberal democracies, it is a reality never acknowledged in the idealistic discourse of their defenders.

In turn, these corporate fiefdoms, legally under the crowns, under the central governments, are the greatest powers of pressure on those same governments that, in the name of the vassals, protect the feudal lords from the masses, from that very people.

Privatization, market society, ego-commodity

A new human species

THROUGHOUT HUMAN HISTORY, all those religions and philosophies that extended beyond the clan, in their social and moral teachings, placed special emphasis on solidarity, altruism, and cooperation. Even earlier. For tens of thousands of years, the hero could be a tribal warrior, but his sacrifice was always altruistic. Even gods or demigods, like Prometheus, Quetzalcoatl, and Jesus, sacrificed themselves in life for the rest of humanity.

Sophisticated philosophies and religions, from Hinduism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Shintoism, to more violent religions like Old Testament Judaism or Mesoamerican ones, biblical prophets, and other religious texts insisted to the point of exhaustion and in various ways on the need for a morality based on social justice and altruism. Probably the most radical of all was Jesus, at least the historical figure that has come down to us through biblical accounts, and his preaching of helping the poor, the sick, and the disadvantaged, of turning the other cheek in the face of offense, and of loving even one's enemies. Despite having had plenty of time, Jesus never condemned homosexuality, did not sanctify private property, nor wealth, nor the possession of weapons, but quite the opposite. Of course, that was before Christianity became an instrument of capitalism. From then on, an army of eloquent pastors and various propaganda outlets would insist on the opposite—in the name of God, needless to say.

It is no coincidence that *greed* was, in all cases, a sin. In many, even wealth itself, accumulation. It is no coincidence that the paradigm of private land ownership was, in all cases, irrelevant. Starting with the commodification of land in 16th-century England, with the commodification

of labor displaced by the *enclosure* and the privatization of the plunder of the colonies by powerful imperial companies like the East India Company (with the same democratic model as the Caribbean pirates), from the birth of the precapitalist paradigm in the 16th century, Calvinist ethics, and the consolidation of the commodification of human existence in the subsequent centuries, *selfishness* (and greed) became, for the first time in history, a dominant ethical and ideological value. Its ideological maturity came with the concept that the pursuit of individual well-being (more than well, *well-being*) is ethically superior because in the long run it leads to the well-being of the rest of humanity. Of course, the first part of the equation always prevailed at the expense of the second, and thus empires never stopped exterminating, looting, and vampirizing the rest of the world in pursuit of their own well-being, which might one day reach the great-great-grandchildren of the millions of starving, enslaved, and massacred victims. In the second half of the century, neoliberals illustrated this ideal with the Trickle-Down Theory, according to which the well-being and unlimited wealth of those at the top could one day reach those at the bottom.

During the Cold War, the Russian-American writer Ayn Rand sought to take liberal ideas about the virtues of selfishness to the extreme and denounced altruism as a plague of humanity. Empathy and compassion are irrational and destructive. The rich are rich because they deserve it, and the poor should die if they are not capable of winning in the capitalist game. In recent decades, Rand became the go-to author for American right-wing politicians. Paul Ryan, the influential representative from Wisconsin (the same state as Joseph McCarthy) and recipient of the Department of Defense Medal, explicitly acknowledged this: "*Ayn Rand, more than anyone, did a fantastic job of explaining the morality of capitalism, the morality of individualism, and that, for me, is the most important thing*." At another time: "*The reason I got involved in public service, in general, if I had to credit one thinker, one person, it would be Ayn Rand*."[62]

Before he discovered that Rand was an atheist, Ryan would give her books to his friends and employees. As we saw earlier, more recent psychological studies have shown the opposite: cooperation and altruism are more highly valued by humans in their infancy before being corrupted by egocentric, hyper-competitive, and psychopathic education.

The utilitarian paranoia was never limited to the First World but was conveniently exported to the colonies as well. A glance at the so-called Asian Tigers in recent decades would suffice to corroborate this

hypothesis. We will see this case in the chapter "Successful Examples of Neocolonialism."

The privatization of land—and of subjects

LET US RETURN TO THE EUROPEAN ORIGIN of this long process, called capitalism, and to a new paradox. Monarchic absolutism, an enemy of feudalism first and liberalism later, functioned as a *disruptor* of the bonds of servitude between vassals and feudal lords. By the 16th century, England had centralized power at the expense of feudal fragmentation long before other European states, and London had concentrated a large part of its population, becoming the largest city in Europe—though not particularly impressive to the rest of the world, including Tenochtitlan in Mexico before the arrival of the Spanish.

But both London and the market depended on agriculture, which was undergoing a radical transformation—more ideological and institutional than technological. Long before the rest of the continent, land was being concentrated into fewer hands, and the number of landless peasant renters was increasing, leaving them exposed to instability, the abstract uncertainty of the market, and the pressure of the new landowners, who were desperate to maximize their profits. The very etymology of the English word *farmer* (peasant, farmer) at the time meant "tenant." The same can be observed with the word *improvement* (improvement), which back then didn't simply mean "to make something better" but "to increase profits" ("*to increase profits*").[xxxii] By the 17th century, the word also applied to

[xxxii] a. *Farmer* (farmer), from the Latin *firmare* (sign, fixed rent, tenant who confirms, strengthens a commitment). Also, "a low-ranking free man," whose origin two centuries earlier was more appropriate for a slave who worked the land. b. *Improve* (to improve): "*to use to one's profit, to increase (income)*" (to make economic income grow); from the Anglo-French *emprouwer* (to produce profits), *profit*, gain, benefit obtained from the land. (Etymonline, 2014). Language holds a secret and hidden memory. Between 2003-2007, with other international students at UGA one weekend, we promised to write a dictionary about the "*idioms*" (sayings) in English that we had been subjected to in the TOEFL exams, which meant the opposite of what the rest of the world assumed. My hypothesis was that they all had something to do with money: "*I feel like a million dollar / bill*" ("I feel like a million dollars, I feel great"), with something related to the market: "*It is not your business*" ("it's not your business, it's none of your concern"); "*I don't buy it*" ("I don't buy it, I don't believe

"aesthetic improvement," which involved clearing the lord's land of poor ranches so they wouldn't spoil the landscape.[63] The need to control everything—from the inferior races, the poorest classes, and even nature itself—is still illustrated today by the Anglo-Saxon and Protestant obsession with dressing formally to go to church or maintaining geometrically controlled lawns and shrubs in uninhabited spaces, like a military haircut. If this psychological observation embedded in Anglo-Saxon culture weren't enough, let's quickly recall the historical origin of that costly and anti-ecological absurdity of watering, fertilizing, and mowing lawns to announce our house, status, and obedience. Its origin has much to do with the birth of capitalism, which we'll analyze in later chapters: the expulsion of peasants from communal lands, the privatization of land, and the presumption of ownership and unproductivity with vast areas of lawns around new castles and estates. Naturally, this was exported just as capitalism was exported through brutal imperialism to the colonies, to the extreme absurdity of reproducing it in climates and territories unsuitable for such ornamental planting, like India and Africa. Today, it is one of the most popular symbols of the "American Dream" in the United States, the imperial colony, the natural and perfect continuation of the British Empire. To maintain this useless imperial symbol and current Anglo-Saxon obsession against any ecological sense, Americans alone invest 11 billion liters of water, 2.2 billion liters of gasoline, and a combined total of 76 million kilograms of pesticides and herbicides each year, totaling 60 billion dollars.

Now let's return to the private ownership of land, which is as old as Sumerian civilization. This particular form of ownership, rarely the majority, was later recognized in Roman law and practiced in England from the 12th century onward. In any case, it was a limited and not widespread right, as it coexisted in various forms with communal and state ownership, which were the most common forms of land ownership.

With capitalism came the commercialization of land, and private property became a superior right and an unquestionable dogma of economic, social, and existential organization. At the time, the privatization of land had an infinitely greater impact than the idea of private ownership of movable things, like a shovel or a donkey, because land defined a space and a way of life.

---

it"), or with an action: "How are you doing" ("how are you doing? How's it going?"); "still working?" ("still working? haven't you finished eating?") etc.

In the feudal system, up until the 16th century, land was not bought or sold like any other commodity. There was no real estate business. The right to use it was not the right of ownership, but the peasant who paid rent or taxes to the feudal lord or landowner had the right to remain on the land, though not absolutely. Unlike a slave, a vassal could not be sold separately from the land they occupied. The feudal lord also couldn't evict them without a legal cause, such as a crime (especially considering there was no modern prison system, only exile).

This changed when capitalism turned land into a market commodity, subject to buying and selling. The enclosure of European land was similar to the fencing of the Americas centuries later, which, under the same logic and the same mechanism of global capitalist exploitation, produced different and even opposite realities. Though to a lesser extent, as in Indigenous America, communal lands also existed in Europe. In fact, they had existed for thousands of years. These were lands that provided firewood and pasture for the surrounding community or the nearest village, as well as areas for cultivation for the landless. To maintain this collective benefit, rights and obligations were regulated by each community.

Through the practice of *enclosure* (fencing), communal lands were first deregulated and then privatized by the most powerful landowners, initially as an illegal practice (which expropriated and increased the value of the privatized land) and later with legal recognition. This privatization process led to several violent rebellions by the dispossessed commoners in the 16th and 17th centuries, which, we can speculate, heightened the need for a larger, more organized, and centralized repressive force (as later, in the 19th century, it would produce the wide boulevards of Paris): the army and the police.[xxxiii] At the time, as in 1607, the attack by thousands of displaced peasants in England and the tearing down of fences closely resembled the so-called "*desalambrar*" (wire-cutting) in Latin America, though

[xxxiii] In some cases, this practice was not due to the relentless *new laws of the market* but to the equally relentless laws of the upper class. In 1542, Henry VIII gifted his friend Sir William Herbert the buildings and land of Wilton Abbey in Salisbury. Herbert already had plenty of land to cultivate, so he decided to beautify the place by expelling its inhabitants, *fencing off* the received area, to dedicate himself to hunting without the rabble working around there. This expulsion not only affected the peasants but also devastated the nearest village. The commoners responded with a rebellion, destroying the fences, but Sir Herbert organized a private police force of 200 men and ordered the violent ones to be hunted like dangerous wolves.

the latter were condemned as communists and the former as communalists.

In both cases, the dispossessed failed due to a simple matter of cohesive force. In England, the *rebels* died in the clashes or were hanged as examples of what not to do. By the mid-18th century, Parliament was dominated by the new capitalist landowners, that is, no longer feudal lords or feudal lords converted to the new paradigm of market benefits over any other reason. Across the Atlantic, the rhetoric of "the good poor" would become "the good Indian" and "the good Black." The English Parliament, with no representatives from the displaced peasantry, legalized the enclosure and privatization of land (*enclosure*), and from then on, for the first time, the word *poverty* became popular in the press, in culture, and in banal political discussions. By the 18th century, mass poverty had already produced its literary classic, *Oliver Twist* (1837), catapulting Charles Dickens to literary glory and England to mass culture. A little earlier, in the 1870s, the English Parliament had already privatized 20 percent of the available land, and misery and criminals plagued the major cities.

In 1895, after analyzing the protests of English workers who, despite the massive theft from the colonies, could not achieve a subsistence wage, the British millionaire Cecil Rhodes concluded that the solution was imperialism (that is, more imperialism): "*I am increasingly convinced of the importance of imperialism… to save the 40 million inhabitants of the United Kingdom from a bloody civil war, we, the administrators of the colonies, must acquire more land [on other continents] to give it to the excess population and secure new markets for our surpluses… if we truly wish to avoid a civil war, we must all become imperialists*."[64] Fifteen years later, in 1910, the gap between the one percent in Europe and the rest of the population was greater than in Asia. Four years later, the so-called *Belle Époque* (the *Golden Age* in Imperial Europe, which coincided with multiple holocausts, massacres, and famines inflicted by the same insatiable Europe's new civilizational system on its colonies in Africa and Asia) would end with the First World War, just as the "Roaring Twenties" of savage capitalism in the United States would end with the Great Depression fifteen years later.

John Locke: The Land Belongs to Those Who (Do Not) Work It

THE CONCENTRATION OF LAND in fewer hands also led to the concentration of population in fewer cities. In 1500, when Tenochtitlan (Mexico) was a rationally planned, hygienic city with a bustling market and a population of 400,000, London was a dirty and unhealthy city with just 60,000 inhabitants. By 1700, it remained dirty and unhealthy, or worse than before, and its population reached 600,000. In 1890, at the height of British global imperialism, it reached 5.5 million. These numbers hide a fundamental factor: the precarization of existence under market forces turned stable owners and tenants into wage laborers or unstable tenants, both subject to the volatile laws of the market. Not volatile for those engaged in the process of accumulating capital. The dispossessed by the aggressive commodification of English land migrated to the big city, just as in the 19th century, freed slaves—new citizens but without land—had to seek work in the large U.S. cities to survive on tips or, more recently in the 20th century, landless indigenous people, Black people, and poor Latin American peasants went to find work in the industries and services of large cities and ended up creating massive suburban settlements called favelas or shantytowns. A process that, as always, repeated others in the so-called "developed" imperial nations but in a delayed manner and without the possibility of expanding authoritatively into other regions of the world already occupied by the dominant empires.

The English dispossessed were the main force that produced the Industrial Revolution, just as centuries later the slaves in the Americas and the dispossessed more recently were and are the main force in providing cheap raw materials for the same process that has been ongoing for several centuries. Just as the dispossession of land and rights of peasants during feudalism (such as the right to inhabit, the right to communal lands, and the right to a fixed rent) produced rebellions in peripheral or colonial continents, like Latin America, it would have happened earlier in Europe itself and, more precisely, at the center of this new social paradigm shift: England.

It goes without saying that in this human adventure, a minority (of class, of nationality) accumulated almost all the benefits and all the credits resulting from the collective effort. As historian Ellen Wood analyzed, "*technological advances alone were not responsible for the so-called 'agricultural revolution,' the basis of later industrialization; on the other hand, the technological changes that initiated the 'Industrial Revolution' were, in all cases,*

very modest."[65] It must be added that these and other technological advances were already underway in India and Bangladesh before being destroyed by the luminous British Empire through cannon fire, protectionist laws, and commercial impositions in the name of a free market strategically destroyed for the benefit of civilized Europe. We will discuss the details of the hundreds of millions of deaths in the process later.

The famous English politician and writer, Thomas More, considered himself one of those displaced by the privatization and concentration of land. As in many cases, the phenomenon was motivated by the expansion of sheep breeders, More defined it in his classic book *Utopia* as the process by which "*sheep eat men*."[66] By the end of the 18th century, a new invention would replace wool and linen with cotton, which was already widely used in Asia. As always, someone from below would pay for this new progress. In this case, it would first be the slaves of the Southern United States and, from 1836 onward, the Mexicans with the expansion of American slavery and the loss of more than half of their territory. Finally, as historian Ellen Wood observes, the dispossession and eviction of peasants by force in England was legalized by Parliament and then legitimized as *the Law of Nature* and the *Will of God* by intellectuals like John Locke.

In his *Second Treatise of Government*, published anonymously in 1639, Locke (not a displaced person but a landowner) reflected on one of the major topics of discussion of the time, the problem of property, performing a narrative transition that justified, in an unsurpassably effective way, the new predominance of private property over communal property: "*God, who has given the World to Men in common possession, has also given them reason to make use of it for the best advantage of Life and convenience* (…) *All the fruits that nature produces and the beasts it feeds belong to Humanity in common* (…) *No one originally has a private Dominion, exclusive of the rest of Humanity, as they are thus in their natural state. However, being given for the use of Men, there must necessarily be a means to appropriate them. The fruit, or venison, that feeds the wild Indian, who knows no enclosure, and is still a common tenant, must be his and so his, that is, a part of him, that another can no longer have any right over it*." Later, he understands private property as that which an individual's labor has added to or extracted from nature: "*The labor of his body and the work of his hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatever, then, he removes out of the state that Nature has provided and left it in, he has mixed his labor with and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his Property*."

Up to this point, he could be accused of communism by some steward of the 20th century or even the 21st. But in 1689, a hundred years before the Storming of the Bastille on the other side of the channel, the father of liberalism makes an almost unnoticed shift regarding the problem of private property of land (always resorting to God), the precise moment of the ideological birth of the capitalist system: "*But the chief matter of Property being now not the Fruits of the Earth, and the Beasts that subsist on it, but the Earth itself* (...) *I think it is plain that Property in that too is acquired as the first. As much land as a man tills, plants, improves, cultivates, and can use the product of, so much is his property. He, by his Labor, as it were, excludes it from the Common* (...) *God, when he gave the World in common to all Mankind, commanded Man also to labor, and the penury of his Condition required it. God and his Reason commanded him to subdue the Earth, i.e., improve it for the benefit of Life, and therein lay out something that was his own, his labor. He that in Obedience to this Command of God, subdued, tilled, and sowed any part of it, thereby annexed to it something that was his Property, which another had no Title to, nor could without injury take from him*."

But there is still one more step: the capitalist mediation in the expropriation of others' surplus value. From the idea that someone who works the land is its natural owner and even private owner (an idea championed by socialists and revolutionaries of the Third World and all agrarian reforms), to the mediation that its owner is not the one who works it but the one who has invested capital, there is one final and decisive step. "*So that God gave Authority for appropriation. The Condition of Human Life, which requires Labor and Materials to work on, necessarily introduces private Possessions*." Locke and history move from the "right of the one who works the land" to the right by title (private property), which will later turn land into an indisputable commodity for buying and selling. A market commodity like any other, such as a shirt or a vase produced in a workshop, even though land remained "a natural good" and a shirt or a vase "products created by labor." After a leap over this contradiction, we arrive at the propaganda article of the dominant system. According to Locke, the "*preservation of Life, of Liberties, and of Estates, I call by the general name: Property*." Now, how to make this new reality effective and how to protect it from those who disagree? Well, as always, by resorting to the monopoly of coercion: "*Therefore, the great and chief end of men uniting into commonwealths and putting themselves under government is the preservation of their property*."[67]

From this initial process of turning the dispossession of workers from communal lands in England into a property right to practicing the same in the Americas, there is only one step called the Atlantic, not very difficult to take. Colonialism and imperialism in the "new world," in Africa, and later in Asia are nothing but the continuation of this successful conviction and practice of wealth accumulation, just as the Spanish conquest on the same continent was a continuation of their medieval fanaticism, developed during the eight centuries of struggle against Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula.

The same John Locke theorized it in his Chapter V on property, a kind of capitalist Gospel. For Locke, taking "unproductive land" from the American Indians was a right and an obligation, since with that dispossession nothing was being taken from Humanity but, on the contrary, something was being given—the idea that savages, like women, had no soul was a matter of debate; what was not debatable was that they did not belong to Humanity and much less to Civilization.

The imperial exploitation of foreign resources was practiced by several European powers, but the origin and development of capitalism was in England. We can add that the continuity of this process is quite obvious: the dispossession based on the laws of the market was first practiced by England on its own peasants, then on Ireland, and finally on the rest of the world. Once Ireland adopted the new rules forcibly imposed by its English and Scottish neighbors, and in the 17th century began to pose competition to England, London resorted to the old tactic of suspending its own laws and contradicting its own sermon to impose restrictions that would prevent any independence of its first colony. The Irish dispossessed by the new regime sold themselves as *indenture* slaves in the colonies of North America, Africa, and India for the giant private East India Company, one of the first extensions of British imperialism. After being discriminated against for being poor and imperfect whites, over time and thanks to the color of their skin (the greatest capital available to poor immigrants), their children became second-tier administrators or successful businessmen. Similarly, the next dominant empire, the United States, first tested its methods of corporate colonialism in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean before projecting it to other continents. A notable difference lay in the fact that the British Empire began as a private company in its colonies and ended as a central government directly administering its own colonies. The United States proceeded in the opposite way. After

a strongly protectionist phase, Washington (like London before) preached free markets and democracy for the rest of the republics to the south and destroyed both whenever they threatened to escape its sphere of influence by challenging the commercial empire of its private transnational corporations. Today, direct military coercion (both imperial in the international sphere and creole in the national sphere of the weaker republics) has been replaced by economic coercion and the indirect safeguarding of military force. Private transnational corporations, as in a global feudal system, continue to dominate the social, political, and economic life of different continents, but coercion is exercised through local states, and these exercise it over their peoples through the dominant national press and national armies that rarely engage in conflicts with other republics, but the direct and indirect coercion over their own peoples is permanent. Those cases that deviate from a state of obedience and functionality, whether democracies or dictatorships, are immediately harassed and blocked, always based on the politically correct discourse of the moment, which is usually freedom (of the market) and the empire of democracy (the creole oligarchy). This reality is difficult to visualize for those who suffer it and easy to mask by propaganda, whose central principle consists of fragmentation and simplification, something akin to sectarian and religious faith. It is very difficult to call a "dictatorship" a global system that has replaced nature itself. The law of the market, although full of politics and an ideology in itself, is represented and perceived as Newton's Law of Gravity (abolished a century ago by Einstein).

Every right has its ideology. For this new theory that will be naturalized as something obvious and unquestionable in the centuries to come, the right to property came from those who worked it. Something that sounds like an old claim of the Latin American left during the 20th century and the demands for agrarian reform, also summarized in slogans like "*tear down the fences*",[xxxiv] which, as we saw, paradoxically has its roots in the reaction against the enclosure of communal lands (*enclosure*) in England at the beginning of Capitalism. It is no coincidence that those democratic governments that attempted it, like that of Jacobo Árbenz in Guatemala, were eliminated by coups promoted by corporations (the new neofeudal lords, champions of neoliberalism). Thus, the original right of

[xxxiv] "*Take down the fences, take down the fences / For the land is ours, it's yours and his / Of Pedro and María, of Juan and José*". (Daniel Viglietti, 1970).

a capitalist to appropriate "unproductive land" did not and does not apply to the right of a landless workers' movement or a popular government to expropriate unproductive land (even compensating the expropriated according to market value, as was the case in Guatemala in the 50s).

But it is precisely at this moment that one of those abstractions occurs that changes the meaning in such a way that day turns into night in a few minutes. Locke begins by insisting that the land belongs to those who work it (those who add something to it with their own effort) and ends up transferring that right from *use value* to *exchange value*, that is, to those who pay for it, not those who use or work it. The historian Ellen Meiksins Wood observed this precise moment in 2002 with absolute clarity when she stated that the "*emphasis on the creation of exchange value as the basis of property is crucial in the theorization of capitalist property*."[68] After considering that if men had been content with communal property, even though it was based on the abundance provided by God, they would have starved to death. For this reason, men (some men) took part of that common property and, by working it, turned it into their private property, something that does not depend on the consent of the commoners who benefit from those lands. Then, Locke reasons (here the classic example)*:* "*the grass that my horse has eaten; the herbs that my servant has harvested; and the minerals I have excavated in any place where I have a right to them in common with others, all become my property, without the need for assignment or consent from anyone; the labor that was mine, which removed all of that from the common state in which they were, has transformed them into my Property*."[69] Wood herself observes that Locke (and, consequently, the rest of the capitalists) consider that "*the herbs that my servant has harvested*" and "*the minerals that I have excavated*" are the same thing. That is, nascent capitalism and feudalism coexisted to the benefit of the former. Today it is not very different, only that the ugly word *serf* has been replaced by *wage laborer*.

England not only imposed the *enclosure* (privatization of land through fencing) on Ireland and North America, but also on India and Bangladesh, with the same result: while the minorities in political and commercial power enriched themselves on an astronomical scale, the people who lost their communal lands, their way of life, production, and consumption, suffered massive famines with tens of millions dead. But the privatization of land also extended to the privatization of water, rivers, and their fish (as in India in 1870 and with the Private Fisheries Protection Act of 1897), under the pretext of making the population more productive

according to the laws of the market and the interests of the owners of the "free market."[xxxv]

Over time, from the perspective of this extractive mentality, "serf," "slave," and "wage laborer" will be variations of the same thing. This idea, difficult to take seriously by most Europeans of his time and, above all, by the inhabitants of the rest of the world until not long ago, has a precedent in North America, 29 years after the creation of the powerful and imperial private company East India Company in 1600 (whose flag was, for a couple of centuries, the same as that adopted by the United States, with thirteen red and white stripes). In 1629, the Puritan son of wealthy English landowners and the first governor of Massachusetts, John Winthrop, had summarized it as follows: "*God has given men a double right to the land; there is a natural right, and a civil right. The first right was natural when men held the land in common… Then, as men and their cattle increased, they appropriated certain parcels by enclosure and were granted a civil right... The Native Americans do not enclose any land… If we leave them enough for their use, we can legitimately take the rest*."[70] Exactly the same justifying ideas applied to the more civilized Irish shortly before, especially in Ulster.

Judging by these words and by subsequent history, by then the *natural right* had already become irrelevant. Apart from resorting to God and natural laws to justify the dispossession of the previous owners of their lands, Winthrop himself explains the high mortality of the natives using the same argument: "*God has consumed the Indians with great plagues, so that few inhabitants remain*."[71] It was God; it was not us who brought the plagues to the Americas, which, in some cases, reduced the native population to ten percent and, even then, they were still nations as populous as the European colonies themselves.

In 1971, my friend Ariel Dorfman and the sociologist Armand Mattelart published *How to Read Donald Duck*. The authors observed that "*all of Disney's attempts are based on the need for his world to be accepted as natural*(…) *this is why his world is populated by animals*." The primitives sing, dance, and sometimes, for fun, they make revolutions. "*Not having granted the noble savages the privilege of the future and of knowledge, every act of plunder does not appear as such, since it removes what is superfluous*[gold, oil, raw materials]. *The unstoppable capitalist dispossession is staged with smiles and coquetry. Poor natives. How naive they are. But if they don't use their*

[xxxv] Only in 2022 did Bangladesh abolish the Private Fisheries Protection Act of 1889.

gold, it's better to take it. Elsewhere it will serve some purpose."[72] In other words, John Locke on steroids, only three centuries later. If the good, the property is not translated into *exchange value*, it is not property and must be converted into such.

But let's return to the origin of the phenomenon. While the richest enclosed the lands of Britain, parliaments legalized dispossession, the intellectuals of power legitimized it, and a wave of vagabonds emerged. The rest of the peasants had to compete for access to and leasing of land and then for the placement of their products in the market. The losers sank into misery or migrated to the cities where they would later become the proletariat, fueling the English Industrial Revolution, which was a total revolution. It not only translated into a different way of producing and a new empire that would invade almost every country in the world to interrupt other development processes and multiply its own accumulation, but it also created a new morality (the Victorian one) and new concepts of beauty, which, in turn, reinforced imperial racism.[xxxvi]

This paradoxical loss of property by peasants due to the privatization of their lands was confirmed with the introduction of property enclosures. In France, where peasants owned their land and tenants paid a fixed price, the pressure of competition for rent and production was less than in England. Early capitalism (as proposed by Wood, emerging in the English countryside and not in the commerce of cities) proved more effective than medieval feudalism as a dominant system, but it promoted modern

[xxxvi] The idea of the superior race, articulated and matured in the 19th century, was also defined as "the beautiful race." Its aesthetic canon, as often happens with cultural canons, survived beyond economic and social changes thanks to the cultural industry. For example, the Marilyn Monroe canon remains the most widespread beauty standard in the world, with some variations. During the Middle Ages, the nobility lived in palaces and castles, and their women were as pale as death. Working was synonymous with poverty and, therefore, with ugliness. Peasant women were strong, thin, and had sunburned skin. Even during the Renaissance, beauty and sensuality were summarized in well-fed and pale women, like a Rubens painting. The Industrial Revolution caused young peasant women to lose their color in the factories and then in the 20th-century offices, which somewhat corrected the aesthetics: upper-class women, who didn't need to work to live, tanned their skin on the beaches of the Mediterranean or the Caribbean. They were sexier because power is sexy. The new beauty standard continued to adopt the woman of the imperial and rich (developed) race, but by the end of the 20th century, it already forced her to tan back and forth like a rotisserie chicken on the beaches, even if they were poor workers. Because that's what fashion has always been about since ancient Rome: imitating the upper classes. At the same time, pornography opened a release valve by turning the world upside down: the slave, the ugly poor (black) man has sex with a beautiful (white) woman, a war trophy.

feudalism in the rest of the world to continue its logic of *coercion-accumulation-narration*. On one hand, the production of goods, wealth, and military power increased at the center of the world, slavery in the colonies and peripheral countries, and the anxiety derived from existential uncertainty everywhere. The market became the supreme dictator and the economic translation of Darwinism. Success produced more success, and failure more failure, increasing social disparities within each country and national disparities globally. At the beginning of capitalism's expansion outside Europe, the economic difference between Europe and Africa was very small. Before the capitalist powers destroyed (more by cannon fire than by industrial inventions during the Industrial Revolution) the Asian powers like India and China, global economic disparities did not favor the West at all. By 1800, the differences between rich and poor countries reached an imbalance of three to one. In the second half of the same century, the disproportion was 35 to one. These are not just numbers but translated into hundreds of millions of deaths due to the new capitalist system and the never-achieved (rather destroyed in its own name) "freedom of the market."[73]

The growing abyss between rich and poor countries, that is, between colonialist and colonized countries, between plunderers and the plundered, began to reverse in the sixties, that is, with the process of decolonization of what during the Cold War was called the "Third World."

Feudalism and capitalism intersect—and procreate

MONARCHICAL ABSOLUTISM facilitated the transition from the feudal system to capitalism.[xxxvii] Landowners and the aristocracy demilitarized, and physical coercion was concentrated in the armies of the central government, which would later extend their power (and the same logic of *coercion-accumulation-narration*) to the rest of the world, creating empires.

[xxxvii] In other books and articles, we have mentioned the contradictions of the capitalist discourse on freedom and its frequent marriages with the 19th-century slave system, with Nazi and fascist dictatorships throughout the 20th century, and with Chinese communism in the 21st century. From any angle, capitalism, at least after its initial stage, was not a democratizing force, as the propaganda of the dominant media and even formal education in developed countries repeats, but quite the opposite.

More than a new social order, a new political, institutional, legal, and ideological order was established. At the same time, as in its final stage, adolescent capitalism would ideologically settle in liberalism, which was born from the same feudal tradition of the dominant lords against the concentrated power of kings—the power of the damned State.

After a protectionist phase, the ideology of the free market became the common factor for both, with the narrative of *freedom* in open contradiction (functioning as a mask) to its practice, the coercion derived from the new unchallengeable power: no longer the sword of the feudal lord or the whip of the slave master but the concentrated capital of the investor.

It was not economic liberalism (the lifting of restrictions on markets dominated by their main investors) that unleashed capitalist forces. "*It was not the markets or industries that made the birth of capitalism possible, but the transformation of property relations in the English rural sector*,"[74] which later led to a transformation in the nature of the market, industry, and, above all, the emergence of the wage worker as the norm, previously stripped of their land by the practice of enclosure (*enclosure*) and stripped of all decision-making power over their own labor.

In the 16th century, the center of commercial development had shifted from Italy to the Netherlands and then, in the 17th century, to England, not despite the fact that English peasants and cities were subject to greater restrictions than those in Italy and the Netherlands but precisely because of it. English state protectionism was brutal until the island became the factory of the world and, with no competition left, began exporting the ideology of the "free market" to the colonies and to independent countries that could not compete with its industries but were expected to supply raw materials like "white gold" (cotton produced by slaves in the southern United States), Indian opium for a market created by cannon fire in China, and for wealthier consumers in the West and other provinces of South America.

In the 16th century, the new international market was no longer limited to luxury goods but included basic necessities like food and clothing. The capitalist market emerges when the market begins to control food production, not just nationally but internationally. That is, when the Netherlands controls the grain market of the Baltic. In other words, the new market deepened the division of labor, no longer just by social class but by nations and regions, with the importer of raw materials and

exporter of manufactured goods imposing prices, conditions, and international treaties by force.

It is then that the processes of production and consumption become radically separated. This unequal relationship between producer and consumer (later between industrialists and extractivists) deepened with the colonization of America and the rest of the world. All of which propelled Europe toward modernity and development, while plunging its colonies and other continents, once prosperous, into a new feudalism with tragic consequences that historiography underestimates and propaganda forgets.

The free market

AS IF THIS COMPLEXITY (seemingly contradictory) were not enough, one need only look at the slave system in the Americas, which contributed to the same Industrial Revolution in England, from the exploitation of slaves in the wealthy southern United States in the 19th century to the wage slaves in the colonies, from Asia and Africa to Latin America—whether entire populations buried in the mines of transnational corporations or contemporary workers.[xxxviii]

In late 18th-century England, new inventions for processing cotton faster replaced wool and linen as the primary raw materials. Although England banned the slave trade in 1807 and slavery in 1833, these new industrial inventions and the skyrocketing demand for cotton they provoked promoted the expansion of slavery in the United States, leading to a new multiplication of that country's territory, this time over Mexican lands, to reinstate slavery as the right of "the free race" and consolidate the massive accumulation of capital by the major banks of the slave-owning South, the millionaires, and the American capitalist empire. Of course, always in the name of democracy and freedom.

American political leaders, though far more hypocritical in their speeches about freedom and democracy, demonstrated far superior strategic intelligence. In its early years, the new republic exported agricultural

[xxxviii] We stopped at this historical logic of Slavery-Industrial Revolution-corporate capitalism in *The Savage Frontier* (2021) and other writings.

products to import manufactured goods, exactly like the Iberian and African colonies. The first Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton (*Report on Manufactures*, 1791), after analyzing the British case, understood that industrialization was impossible without protectionist policies and an independent economy based on the development of industry, technology, and science.[75] Hamilton's mercantilist policy was not one of open borders to "free competition" but was heavily protected by subsidies and tariffs, alongside a policy aimed at a stronger and more centralized state (something that, for obvious reasons, Thomas Jefferson initially, and later the slaveholders and their heirs, would resist until the 21st century). Three-quarters of a century later, President Ulysses Grant, shortly after the Civil War, understood this and summarized it as follows: "*For centuries, England has relied on protection, taken it to the extreme, and achieved satisfactory results from it. There is no doubt that they owe their current strength to this system. But after two centuries, England finds it convenient to adopt free trade because it understands that protection can no longer offer it anything. Very well then, gentlemen, my knowledge of our country leads me to believe that within two hundred years, when the United States has extracted from protection all that it can offer, it too will be a champion of free trade*."[76] A couple of decades later, another president, William McKinley, confirmed the same common sense: "*Under free trade, the merchant is the master and the producer the slave. Protection is nothing more than the law of nature, the law of self-preservation, of self-development*."[77]

At the same time, Latin American countries followed the opposite course. Latin American countries (or rather, their liberal oligarchy), from Mexico to Argentina, adopted the British tale of free trade without a second thought. In 1860, the Argentine Juan Bautista Alberdi acknowledged that "*it is the countryside that has points of contact and commonality with industrial, commercial, and maritime Europe, which was the promoter of the revolution, because it is the countryside that produces raw materials, that is, wealth, in exchange for which Europe supplies America with the manufactures of its industry. The rural countryside is what America has that is serious for Europe*." Later, he added: "*In 1852, France was about to abandon all hope of free navigation of the tributaries of the Plata (Lepredour Treaty) when the Argentine provinces defeated the Americanism of Buenos Aires and gave France and the world, without conditions, the freedom of river navigation and trade*."[78]

A political adversary and personal enemy of Alberdi, President Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, like the vast majority of the national oligarchy,

shared the same idea that "*we will not be manufacturers except over the course of centuries and with the agglomeration of millions of inhabitants: our simple means of wealth lies in the export of raw materials that European industry needs*."[79] All of which resembles the Spanish cry of Unamuno: "*let them invent*."[80]

This extractivist ideology of the colonized provided Argentina with a certain mercantilist wealth for a few decades, until everything ended in the 1930s with the belated industrialization proposals of the first Peronist period. We could continue with other examples that drenched Africa and Latin America in blood and misery, but let us conclude with the case of the liberal dictator of Mexico, Porfirio Díaz. In the name of progress and "*a peaceful invasion*," Díaz handed over his country to Anglo-Saxon corporations and ruined the peasant and indigenous population with his extractivist policies and the continuation of the privatization of land that began in the 1850s, all of which would end with the majority of the peasant population landless and, consequently, with the violent and inevitable rupture of the Mexican Revolution of 1910.

Now let us turn to the ideological roots of this modern dogma, this imperialist ideology of *free trade*, which has nothing to do with freedom, neither of individuals nor of peoples nor of the market itself. To a large extent, it was articulated by Adam Smith and, above all, by David Ricardo. Ricardo, a classic of liberal economics, became rich speculating in the stock markets and even more so with the Napoleonic Wars and the prohibitions on free importation and free trade imposed in England. Both Adam Smith and David Ricardo (the ideas of the latter are essentially the former's taken to the international stage) attempted to resolve the contradictions in their abstract models with *ad hocs* that recall Isaac Newton's reliance on God to patch up gaps in his theories—the "Hand of God" explained why his calculations sometimes didn't align with astronomical observations.

In the case of Smith and Ricardo, these ad hocs were psychological. Smith believed that the danger of hyper-accumulation by corporations would be resolved because millionaires would generously part with their wealth, as social prestige was stronger than material ambition. For his part, Ricardo argued that the danger of job destruction in one country in favor of a cheaper one, due to his theory of "competitive advantage" in an abstract free market, would be resolved because capitalists would prefer to earn less in their own countries rather than move their capital abroad to

earn more—it hardly needs to be said that historical experience flatly contradicts this.

In his classic *The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* from 1817, David Ricardo agrees with Adam Smith that colonialism (words like *imperialism*, *slavery*, *India* or *Bangladesh* are absent from his vocabulary) contradicts their abstract ideas about the free market and, not without naivety, they consider it harmful to both the colonized and the colonizer.[81] A statement that is just that, a statement, with no basis in history, quite the opposite. Their only argument consists of a hypothetical situation where, if England were a colony of France, and France imposed export subsidies on wheat, France would also lose by failing to reduce the price of wheat in a situation of perfect free competition. The tree obscuring the forest.

Modern empires benefited from free markets in the colonies and protectionism in their metropolises, up to the present day. Without the tariffs and subsidies of England in the century before Ricardo, neither the economy nor the industry of India and Bangladesh would have been destroyed, nor would the English economy and industry have developed as they did; likely, the Industrial Revolution would have matured in the wealthier and more effective colonies of India and Bangladesh before being interrupted by the force of European cannons. Or, more likely still, another form of development, perhaps less mercantilized, would have displaced the capitalist order that emerged in its place through all manner of violence that, in no way, aligned with the idealistic and utopian dogma of the Ricardian free market.

But one thing was (and is) the idealism of the free market of Smith and Ricardo, and another was (and is) the pragmatism of politicians and businessmen. Even when the politician and businessman is Ricardo himself. Ricardo was also a member of the British Parliament and amassed a fortune in the government's financial sector. Essentially, like Adam Smith, he challenged the dominant theory of mercantilism (which aimed for a favorable trade balance in currency, gold, and silver) in favor of the "free market," according to which each country had a "natural advantage" (later defined as "absolute advantage") and should focus its energies on this advantage. Countries with minerals should export minerals, and countries with industries should export manufactured goods.

Ricardo forgot to mention that industries were never a "natural characteristic" of industrialized countries, which is why, as the century

progressed and European imperialism reached its peak, the idea of racial superiority, of an entrepreneurial race, was invoked: some races, the Black ones, were born to obey, and others, the white ones, to command—all proclaimed by the champions of the free market. When this centuries-old imperialist tradition fell out of favor, racial prejudice was replaced by cultural and even ideological prejudice to continue practicing the same thing.

This Ricardian theory translated in the 20th century into the Heckscher-Ohlin theory, according to which countries with cheap labor should focus on intensive cultivation (a typical slave and extractive system), while those with excess capital should focus on investment—all decorated with mysterious Cartesian graphs to give their socioeconomic theories an aura of hard science. Which is another magnificent imperialist paradox: cheap labor in the colonies was maintained in that state by the commercial and military violence of empires, which, in turn, extracted natural wealth, from gold, silver, diamonds, and all kinds of raw materials necessary for their industries and to achieve the magical status of *countries with excess capital that should dedicate themselves to investing in countries lacking capital and with an abundance of cheap labor*.

For this colonial logic to work, it is necessary to remove all the "factors that distort the free market." That is, the subsidies, taxes, and tariffs that developed industries in the empires of the North and that they still maintain today, while continuing to sell the idea of the "free market" through their outraged politicians and their stewards scandalized by the backwardness of the underdeveloped race-culture—for these armchair theories, slavery (both the whip-driven and the wage-driven kind) was not a *market-distorting factor*; merely a pebble in the shoe of moral conscience.

Both Adam Smith and later David Ricardo were against the policies that made industrialization possible in England, the capitalist and military hegemony of Europe, and later the United States: subsidies and protectionist tariffs. Naturally, those who suffered from them in the colonies or dependent republics immediately subscribed to and practiced these savior-like and developmentalist formulas that they never applied in their global models. In fact, *there is no historical example of prosperity and development based on the free market*; the free market was the ideology enthusiastically adopted by the slaves of the colonies.

All these celebrated economic theories that since the 20th century have adored pseudo-mathematical equations failed, not only as theories free of contradictions and with some minimal predictive power, but also

as tools to prevent or save poor and rich countries from their respective economic crises. Except when they had a navy armed with powerful bombers, colonies, or, more recently, hundreds of military bases around the world.

A century earlier, in 1848, Karl Marx criticized these abstract ideas about the market and productive advantages (democratic differences where everyone participates in decisions and benefits from each transaction) as being convenient to imperialism: the productive advantages of a country depend on colonial imposition, not on mere nature. In a lecture given in Brussels on "free trade," and with clear allusions to David Ricardo and his apologists, Marx summarized it as follows: "*To call cosmopolitan exploitation universal fraternity is an idea that can only be born in the brain of the bourgeoisie. All the destructive phenomena caused by unlimited competition within a country are reproduced on a more gigantic scale in the rest of the world (…) We are told that free trade would create an international division of labor and, therefore, give each country the production most in harmony with its natural advantage. You believe, gentlemen, that the production of coffee and sugar is the natural destiny of the West Indies, but two centuries ago, nature, which knows nothing of trade, had not planted sugar cane or coffee there*."[82]

In 1902, the British economist and historian John Hobson published his celebrated and cursed book *Imperialism: A Study* in which he expressed a consciousness that burned then and still burns today: "*Great Britain has become a nation that lives on foreign tribute, and the social classes that enjoy this tribute have an ever-greater incentive to employ public policy, the public treasury, and public force to expand the field of their private investments and thus safeguard and improve their private investments*."[83]

In other words, if the pragmatic and fanatical Anglo-Saxon businessmen had paid any heed to Adam Smith and David Ricardo, neither Europe nor the United States would have ever become the global superpowers that dominated, benefited from, made, and unmade the world at their whim as perfect dictatorships in the name of civilization, freedom, democracy, and Human Rights—leaving destroyed countries and hundreds of millions of people massacred or dead in dozens of catastrophic famines.

Land, capital, and the narrative of freedom

TO CLOSE THIS CHAPTER, let us briefly return to the relevant issue of land. In Europe, the feudal system survived for centuries after the birth of capitalism, just as capitalism will survive for a long time when a new way of organizing human existence takes its place. In Latin America, the *enclosure* was called *fencing, walling* or *enclosure* and was practiced until not long ago on the lands of indigenous peoples across most of its territory or by displacing Afro communities, as in Brazil or Colombia.

Today, two decades into the 21st century, the same practice that began in 16th-century England on communal lands and the displacement of native populations for the benefit of big business continues to be practiced, especially in Africa. Most indigenous communities on this continent still hold land as most of the world did for thousands of years, that is, communally. From my personal experience in the 1990s in Mozambique, I was left with the impression that for this vast continent, especially its sub-Saharan region, modern communism was no less foreign than the most moderate capitalism. As in almost all previous cases, even today these communities and their individuals do not hold a piece of paper in some unreachable government office, which is easily corrupted by foreign interests and the local oligarchy, who always manage to legalize the unstoppable private dispossession of big businesses, from timber extraction to mining.

Currently, when in some cases, governments like that of South Africa confiscate a small portion of "*lands held purely for speculative purposes*", the press and some libertarian (neoliberal) institutes like the Mises Institute report on "*seizure of farmland, owned by whites without compensation*" and headline it as an accusation that in the past signaled the prelude to a coup d'état: "SOCIALISM BY ANOTHER NAME."[84] The bill of the former Dutch colony, later organized under apartheid, was widely criticized as racist because the affected are "overwhelmingly white." In 2018, then-president Donald Trump criticized the measure for "*taking land from white farmers*" and white supremacists spread this misinformation to consolidate the myth of "white genocide," an invention of 19th-century colonialists and a narrative of the decaying far-right of the 21st century.[85]

The present is a product of the past. The colonization of South Africa begins when two employees of the Dutch East India Company shipwrecked in 1647 and survived for months thanks to the provision of water

and food by the natives before falling into the hands of the British Empire. A similar story to that of the settlers in North America and their celebrated Thanksgiving. Upon returning to their country, the settlers reported on the fertility of the land at the southern tip of Africa, making it an excellent stop for colonial traffic to India—again, the same story of the fugitive slave hunters from the United States who crossed the Mexican border seeking freedom and, ultimately, ended up annexing Texas.

The Anglo-Saxon fanaticism for profit over any other human dimension is now a matter of mere "common sense." In reality, it was a peculiarity in human history. Currently, 72 percent of South African land is in the hands of whites, who make up nine percent of the total population. Policies aimed at reversing a century-old past of genocidal racism, colonization, and dispossession are, naturally, labeled as racism and perverse socialist policies.

There is no complete dispossession without the colonization of truth and common sense by the grand narrative. Like a plant, like a virus, once inoculated, the master narrative reproduces itself for many generations. It doesn't even need to be defended. It defends itself. Not through any complicated study but through the simplicity of the slogan and comfortable ignorance.

NEW FORMS OF COERCION

The abstract dogma

IT WOULD BE A USELESS SPECULATION if we were to ask what the world would have been like if, instead of capitalism, another system had developed. What we know, concretely, is that capitalism interrupted other forms of development in America, Asia, and Africa. Technological progress, the basis of not only capitalist progress but of many other systems, had been occurring for centuries and millennia before a new conception of land ownership and everything else based on the abstraction of money, the market, and the concept of exchange value developed in England. Only in Europe, by the 12th century, an agricultural revolution had already taken place based on new technologies, which, in turn, led to population growth—interrupted by the first wave of the Black Death.

The long history of the parasitic extraction and accumulation of productive surpluses in the name of God first (John Locke), then Darwinism (imperialism), production, progress, and peace (neoliberalism), and finally anticommunism and God again (neofascism), had a clear objective that has progressively radicalized, but not without critics and certainly not without internal contradictions. The liberal dogma adapted itself to the interests of the elites of the time, even as it forgot its constitutional principles—after all, they weren't that important, much less sacred.

For example, Adam Smith himself acknowledged that someone who must work under coercion is not free. As economist Michel Hudson recently observed, the dominant economic theory today is the dogma of the Chicago School, which serves the old rentiers, now called investors, demigods of finance. This school has not only reinforced the myth of the free market, free competition, fiscal discipline, and all that which Washington and other former empires demand of other countries but never practice themselves, but it has also consolidated the scientistic myth that economics is a hard science, separate from all politics and geopolitics, full

of Cartesian graphs that never serve to predict anything other than to lecture neocolonies and make them "responsible for their own failures" for not understanding how the world and mathematics work. Even relativistic and quantum physics have recognized the participatory role of the observer in the observed object, but not economics. With some exceptions. An economic theory is not the abstract and sanitized explanation of an economic phenomenon but part of it.

The arachnids managed to popularize their own definition of a "free market," changing the classical concept of a "market free of rentiers" to the more convenient "market of free rentiers." Consistent with their practice and interests, this school has imposed an economistic language to consolidate the idea that there are no realistic alternatives to the current model: the fictitious separation between politics and economics, between ideology and reality. While capitalism achieved something akin to a separation of economics and politics, of finance and the real economy, both continue to orbit around each other, like two close stars.

The power of the neofeudal liberals

IN THE MODEL OF INVERSE PROGRESSION, contemporary liberalism corresponds to, for example, Roman oligarchs assassinating their emperors and feudal-liberals opposing the centrality of states centuries later. In Enlightenment Europe, those states were in the hands of arbitrary and absolute monarchs, something indefensible by the new bourgeois thinking, which is why during the 19th century progressive intellectuals were liberals. In the 20th century, liberals revealed themselves for what they were: neofeudal, oligarchic enemies of a central state that questioned "their freedom" to do as they pleased in the markets they dominated by the force of capital and the media. Not by chance, the slaveholders of the American South, militarily defeated in 1865, became the corporations that detested the central power of the federal government and advocated for the "freedom" of independent states, just as they had done before to defend their particular right to continue accumulating wealth thanks to the "peculiar institution," slavery. In the United States, these millionaire slaveholders were called conservatives, because they were, but their socioeconomic tradition

was liberalism (stemming from feudalism, European and American) and, more radically, neoliberalism from the second half of the 20th century.

The reparations of the governments of the time were always for the slaveholders who lost their property (the slaves), never for the slaves or their descendants. England paid the equivalent of 21 billion dollars (40 percent of its state budget) to the slaveholders who were harmed by the abolition of slavery (which in reality continued to supply raw materials to English industries from the Americas). The payment was made as part of the national debt, so the English crown only finished compensating the slaveholders in 2015.[86] A similar sum was paid by impoverished Haiti to the French empire from 1820 to 1947 and for the same reasons: the criminals in power lost part of their private property. What the lower classes lose never matters. University of Connecticut professor Thomas Craemer has calculated that if the unpaid hours of those slaves in the United States alone were added up, their value in wages today would amount to $17 trillion, nearly the total of the current U.S. economy.[87] A similar calculation could be made if we recalculate the difference between workers' wages, the profits extracted by investors and corporate owners, and the real value of production.

In 2021, the conservative favorite for the California governorship, Larry Elder, argued that it is reasonable for white people to demand reparations for the abolition of slavery, since Black people were their property. "*Like it or not, slavery was legal*," Elder said. "*The abolition of slavery stripped white masters of their property*." Elder is a Black lawyer on his mother's, father's, grandparents', and great-grandparents' side. In other words, a descendant of private property.

In any case, the common factor has been the accumulation of concrete power, both national and international, based on the abstraction of capital. This logic also has a historical process. Capitalist trade (that is, not the traditional trade of *circulation* of goods but the *imposition* of its laws on other institutions within a society) was not enough to transition to the stage of industrial capitalism. The development of cities that explain the emergence of the precapitalist market does not explain the industrialization of England. Karl Marx was the first to observe what he called "failed transitions," that is, the industrial delay of powerful mercantile cities like Florence and later the powerful Netherlands, whose prosperity and accumulation centered on trade—not free trade but the "extra-commercial" advantages of the time, such as their development of new agricultural

technologies, their banking system, and their great naval and military power. More rural, England also developed its commercial and, above all, industrial capitalism.

Agricultural production in the statist France of the 18th century was the same as that of England. But the new English system, based on rent according to market laws, exerted greater pressure on the peasant to increase production or lose everything in an unstable system. To achieve this, England also resorted to the same extra-economic powers of coercion (military police), but it radicalized a fundamental characteristic of capitalism: coercion through the accumulation of capital and (unlike the so-called "failed transitions" like the Netherlands) coercion over production. While this pressure to extract surplus value from the peasant and working classes by the upper classes was not radically new, the new English capitalism pushed to increase production by reducing costs and maximizing profits. Sound familiar?

As mentioned earlier, to maximize these objectives, at the start of the so-called Industrial Revolution, England established strong protectionist measures, which is why the ideology of the "free market" was only an export product when its industries had no competition in the world and needed to place their manufactured surplus. Both the extraction and the sale of manufactured goods were also processes of brutal impositions and coercion, despite the pretty flags of freedom and the free market.

Another central peculiarity of the new coercion that developed in industrial capitalism was that the traditional appropriations of the productive surplus from the working classes were no longer carried out through personal coercion but by more abstract and invisible means, dictated by the dominant economic system, which, in the absence of a king or aristocrat to behead, would become central to the ideological and cultural propaganda of the following centuries. As in other times, the paradigm of the moment was and is called the "real economy." In the words of Ellen Wood, "*Capitalism became the only form of appropriation of the production of its direct producers, who (unlike slaves and servants) are legally free while their surplus value is stripped away by purely economic means*."[88] That is, the same ancient tradition of appropriating the production of others, but now without direct, human, visible coercion, but rather *natural*, almost divine.

Even so, this abstract and depersonalized logic of appropriation and accumulation was never free from physical coercion. While in the colonies and satellite countries, imperial armies and their complements, the

national armies, fulfilled this function, within the central, extractive countries, armies gave way to other institutions almost as sacrosanct as the armies themselves. For example, parliaments and the judicial system.

Ideology of the judicial system

LET'S RECALL A CASE (largely forgotten in the sea of media pollution) that encapsulates institutional, cultural, and capitalist ideology. Henry Ford was one of the many millionaires who admired and were decorated by Hitler, with an aristocratic and racist view of societies. His decision to grant his workers one of the longest-fought-for union rights in 1926, the eight-hour workday (8-8-8), was based on the idea that workers should have time and purchasing power to expand the businesses of those at the top. Like Hitler, Ford went even further in producing a "people's car" (Volkswagen).

Seven years earlier, and due to the success of the *Model T*, Ford Company had accumulated excess capital, so its manager, Henry Ford, decided to increase his workers' wages. To a large extent, this was a publicity strategy and, above all, Ford's suspicion that some shareholders were accumulating profits to open or expand their own companies to compete with his, but in practice, it would benefit the company's workers.

The brothers John and Horace Dodge, suppliers of some mechanical parts for Ford and owners of ten percent of the company's shares, sued Ford Co., arguing that the accumulated capital belonged to the shareholders, not the workers, whose wages were already competitive in the market. What more was needed? The lawsuit was based on the accusation that the workers were stealing money that belonged to the investors.

In 1919, the Michigan Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Dodges, which not only allowed them to receive startup capital for their own *Dodge Motor Company*, but, more importantly, set a judicial, cultural, and ideological precedent. Since then, decisions by other courts and other means have turned into written dogma the idea that *capital and its profits belong to the shareholders, not the workers*. Explicitly, the state Supreme Court determined that company managers must administer their companies for the benefit of their shareholders, not for the charity of their

workers. A philosophy that closely resembles that of the slave system, abolished half a century earlier but still thriving in the rest of the dominant culture, reproduced and practiced from media mogul William Hearst to every CEO of the most powerful transnational corporations in the country.

In any case, we always return to the decisive factor: the *concentration of power* by a tiny minority. The transition from the *medieval feudal* system to the *capitalist* system is a transfer of power from the concentration of goods (basically land) to the concentration of capital, that is, a process of accumulation and abstraction. But after the political replacement of feudal lords by monarchical states and their concentration of political power (the absolutist states), the new liberals, that is, the old feudal lords, resumed the administration of power. The so-called medieval corporations ceased to be workers' guilds and became modern and postmodern corporations, that is, guilds of millionaires, the new feudal lords who surpass the power of national governments themselves, as in the Middle Ages.

From the *enchanted* world of the countryside and agricultural production of the Middle Ages, we moved to the abstraction of cities and money.[xxxix] This process of abstraction, of separation (*alienation*, in Marxist terms) of individuals from the product of their labor, occurs even in markets. The traditional market, the precapitalist market, was an important activity as it would be during capitalism, but human life and social institutions were not defined by their commercialization. As historians like Ellen Wood have observed, capitalism does not arise with the market but with the commodification of land. Until then, there was no real estate market, just as there was no labor market, a consequence of the expulsion of peasants from their communal lands and fixed rents. Radical commercialization, like industrialization first and consumerism and robotization later, will be consistent processes toward dehumanization—depression, the loss of meaning in existence, and collective rage through comfort, overstimulation, and consumerist pleasure.

[xxxix] With the fall of the Middle Ages *"the subject sees themselves as someone who has been freed from the slavery of nature's 'enchantments,' as well as from the need to obey authority or external control. Secondly, and closely related to the subject's position as the 'ideal spectator,' is a view of the* self *as an agent of change in the external world. […] The third element of this narrative expresses the social consequences of the first two: a state understood as subjects will be considered a free association of equal individuals whose corporate identity is confirmed by the success of individual social and economic goals*". Cascardi, Anthony J. *The Subject of Modernity*, p. 60.

Narratives

EACH HISTORICAL PERIOD HAS BEEN DISTINGUISHED from others by its own ways of enforcing these basic laws of what we could summarize as CAN (*Coercion-Accumulation-Narration*) and by the degree of brutality with which it did so; not by having abolished or suspended these laws at any point. For example, during the European Middle Ages, the coercion of the nobility over the peasants was based, essentially, on the force of arms (the sword, the horse, and the fortress) while the narrative that legitimized it came largely from the church, from court biographers and essayists (Marqués de Santillana, Fernando del Pulgar, Fernán Pérez de Guzmán, Juan de Zabaleta) and from the most popular fairy tales—later canonized in versions like *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Cinderella*, or the highly significant *Rumpelstiltskin, the Jumping Goblin*.

The Catholic reference "*pray to God and wield the mace*" originally alluded to labor effort, but tradition, for obvious reasons or through popular wisdom, has understood it in a more political sense. From the center of Protestant power, President Theodore Roosevelt summarized and applied the same idea in his *big stick* policy: "*show that you carry a big stick while speaking softly*." He was referring to his foreign policy toward the "black republics" ("*the perfectly stupid race*," according to one of his articles from 1895), a policy rooted in the 19th-century slave culture, translated into republican imperialism, brutal and gentle in the 20th century.

In the Middle Ages (and in cases like Spain, until the 18th century), the justice system was hierarchical and applied depending on social class, ethnicity, religion, and the gender of the individual.[89] Apart from the sermons on the virtues of obedience and poverty that the illiterate population heard every Sunday (a tradition that extended even into the Modern Era and, later, well into the 20th century), the social narrative not only made it clear that the nobles were not evil (they were noble) but that they protected the vassals of the countryside and the towns (the villains) from external attacks. The peasants and villains had no way to question this narrative, leading to the paradox that the feudal lords were not only those who arbitrarily usurped part of their production but, when it came to the wars of their supposed protectors, it was they, the pawns, who went to the

front, as in chess, while the nobility collected the spoils (new lands) and filled themselves with glory and honor in the books and paintings of their protected artists.

This logic has not changed much, if we consider the wars of empires and modern corporations, but in the Middle Ages and even during the Inquisition, access to information, to subversive ideas (heresies), and to the acceptance of any protest movement was practically nonexistent. The intellectuals were clerics, monks, and palace vassals writing flattering biographies of their patrons—all with time to read and copy ancient texts, living off the charity of the rich who lived off the labor of the poor. Even as late as the 16th century, in 1575, Juan Huarte, one of the most famous doctors in Spanish history, wrote the classic *Examination of Wits for the Sciences* where he concluded that, to be intelligent and wise, it was necessary to "*have sub-rufous hair, which is a color mixed of white and blond. Because this hair is a thick vapor that rises from the knowledge that the brain produces at the time of its nutrition… However, this is not the case for Germans and Englishmen, because their blond hair comes from the burning of much cold*."[90] The description, coincidentally, matches the phenotype of his king, Philip II. As if that weren't enough, Huarte repeated another European myth, according to which the Bible mentions that God favored David, the blond son of Samuel, and also took care to describe Jesus as a blond man.[xl]

As it happens today, any questioning of power, its legitimacy, and beauty was demonized. The means of physical and narrative coercion were monopolized. Without breaking these basic laws, the Renaissance and Capitalism changed some things. For example, although physical coercion continued to reside in the armies (from the 16th century as professional infantry, a Swiss-Spanish invention) and in the Parisian police, and later the Victorian police, the narrative remained only partly in the hands of the church. With the written press, the more independent medieval minstrels became mass media and fell into the hands of powerful owners. The 19th century witnessed an explosion of the press, such as the *penny press* three years before the secession of Texas (at one or two cents per copy); the

[xl] Huarte relies on the distorted Vulgate version, citing biblical passages that refer to the phenotype of the prophets: *"erat autem rufus, et pulcher aspecto decoraque facie…*" Since the Gospels make no reference to Jesus as a blond man (in fact, when Judas betrays him to the Romans, he must point him out with a finger among the crowd, as Jesus resembled the rest of the inhabitants of the region at the time, meaning he was dark-skinned), Juan Huarte mentions a certain Publius Lentulus, a Roman who wrote to the Senate of the Empire from Jerusalem describing Jesus as a man with light eyes and hair like a ripe hazelnut (Huarte, p. 306).

invention of the rotary press in 1843, three years before the invasion and plunder of Mexico, and, at the end of the century, the invention of color printing and the Yellow Press, which invented the Spanish-American War and the myth of the attack on the USS Maine ("*We will never forget*") for commercial and geopolitical reasons.

But let us leave the N (narrative) of CAN for a moment and return to the first two, Coercion and Accumulation.

Hijacked democracies. Freedom for the elite

EVERYONE LIKES SEX. Everyone likes freedom. In the capitalist world, the market takes care of sex and politics takes care of freedom—neither real sex nor real freedom, needless to say, but their fetishes.

We are not facing a contradiction but the same process. In the same way that, after the Civil War in the United States, the slave-owning millionaires (with their fortunes hidden in banks in Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi) became the business millionaires of the 20th and 21st centuries. We can see a similar continuity from the feudal lords, to the bankers, and later to the great industrialists: *they were all against a centralized power* (the king or the modern state) that regulated social relations and prevented them from maximizing their private profits, which they called *freedom*—the private freedom of the owners of economic power at the time.[xli] Both the slave owners, first, and the champions of "free enterprise" in the United States still reject centralized government today and advocate for the independence of the states and, within their states, for the independence of their multimillion-dollar businesses.[xlii]

The same distrust inspired the feudal lords against the kings much earlier in Europe, just as the new commercial and industrial bourgeoisie rebelled against the centralized power of governments. All of them, from

[xli] A particularly serious study on why conservatives today and always have been in favor of state autonomy and against a central federal government is provided by professors from their respective law schools, Peggy Cooper Davis (New York University), Aderson Bellegarde Francois (Howard University), and Colin P. Starger (University of Baltimore) in the article titled "*The Persistence of the Confederate Narrative*".

[xlii] In fact, in recent decades they have managed to get the Supreme Court to identify money invested in politics as a subject of the right to "freedom of speech."

the feudal lords to the great industrialists, passing through the slave owners and the petty bourgeoisie, developed the economic ideology of liberalism. That is, economic liberalism, because, in general, they were socially anti-liberal, as the slave owners and the fathers of neoliberalism in the 20th century, the economists Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman, made clear, both in favor of and promoters of brutal liberal dictatorships of the extreme right in the neocolonies of Africa and Latin America.

The empires of the Spanish and Portuguese crowns that began in 1492 had little to nothing of capitalism, but, through the transfer of thousands of tons of gold and silver to Europe, among other crucial goods like Peruvian guano, they accelerated the accumulation of capital that multiplied trade in the Netherlands and the subsequent industrialization centered in England. This marked the military difference to turn the rest of the world into colonies and interrupt their own development processes, all of which was later justified with theories of a superior race and culture.[xliii] Without the gold and silver from the Americas, several European economies would have collapsed due to the trade deficit they had with India and China. The silver from Potosí was to Europe then what the printing of dollars has been for the United States. By the 18th century, thanks to the slave labor of millions kidnapped in Africa, Portugal extracted more gold from Brazil than Spain and the pirates had transferred to Europe in previous centuries. In 2017, historian Jason Hickel observed that the classic argument of many economists, according to which the Global South did not develop due to a lack of capital, is simply false: the South had plenty of capital, it was just stolen, and its population, as in Africa, was kidnapped for forced labor in extraction and transfer.[91] The same thing that happens today with national debts, but in different forms.

In 2017, the Indian-British diplomat and intellectual Shashi Tharoor participated in a panel in Australia. An attendee challenged his position by reminding him of the official history: "*According to you, Britain*

[xliii] The idea attributed to my friend Eduardo Galeano that "*Underdevelopment is not a stage of development. It is its consequence. The underdevelopment of Latin America stems from the development of others and continues to feed it*" was, after the publication of *The Open Veins of Latin America* (1971), demonized by all media with books like *Manual of the Latin American Idiot*, which only proved that their authors were specialists in the field of idiocy, disguised with their classic tone of obviousness. They achieved no success in the universities of the world, which was the least of their promoters' concerns, most likely supported by the millions of dollars that the CIA used to and still channels into the "promotion of art and culture," as long as it serves as ideological propaganda.

left India in worse condition than it found it…what about the engineering skills, infrastructure, and, above all, the education that Indians acquired thanks to England?" Tharoor's response can be summarized in a few sentences: "*The British arrived in one of the richest countries in the world, whose GDP accounted for 27 percent of global wealth in the 18th century, 23 percent in the 19th century, and after 200 years of plunder and destruction, India was reduced to a poor country. When the British left India in 1947, the country represented just three percent of the world's GDP, with 90 percent of the population below the poverty line, a literacy rate of 17 percent, and a life expectancy of 27 years. The institutes of technology that exist today were established in India after its independence (…) India was the world's largest producer of textiles for two thousand years... The classic excuse is: 'Oh, it's not our fault that you missed the train of the Industrial Revolution.' Of course we missed the train; it was because you threw us under its wheels. In the name of the 'free market,' the British destroyed, by force of cannon, the free market that already existed in India*."[92]

In 2022, professors Jason Hickel and Dylan Sullivan published a detailed analysis titled "*Capitalism and Extreme Poverty*" where they calculate the impact of the imperial policies of capitalism. In India alone, in just forty years, British colonialism caused over 100 million deaths and stole at least 45 trillion dollars in goods, that is, more than ten times the current economy of the entire United Kingdom. Analyzing three basic quantitative factors (real wages, physical stature, and mortality), the researchers demolished the idea that before the reign of capitalism, 90 percent of the population lived in extreme poverty and that it was, precisely capitalism, the system that created global wealth. The popular prejudice could only apply to imperialist countries, not to the rest of the world. "*The rise of capitalism caused a dramatic deterioration in human well-being. In all the regions studied, incorporation into the global capitalist system was associated with a decline in wages below the subsistence minimum, a deterioration in human stature, and a spike in premature mortality. In parts of South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America, levels of well-being have still not recovered. Where there has been progress, significant improvements in human well-being began several centuries after the rise of capitalism. In the core regions of northwest Europe, progress began in the 1880s, while in the periphery it began in the mid-20th century, a period characterized by the rise of socialist and anti-colonial political movements that redistributed income and established public supply systems*."[93] In an article published in *New Internationalist*, the same authors summarize their previous study as follows: in the 20th century, "*the*

amount of food that could be purchased in Latin America and much of sub-Saharan Africa with the average worker's wage decreased significantly, reaching levels lower than those of the 17th and 18th centuries." Referring to the last 50 years, they conclude that, starting with the reaction against social and progressive movements in the Global North *"neoliberal policy was implemented by governments aligned with corporations, most notably those of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. In the Global South, it was often carried out through coups and other violent imperialist interventions by the U.S. and its allies, even in countries like Indonesia (1965), Chile (1973), Burkina Faso (1987), and Iraq (2003). The IMF and the World Bank imposed neoliberal ideology on countries not subjected to invasions and coups in the form of 'Structural Adjustment Programs' (SAPs), which required governments to privatize national resources and public goods, cut labor and environmental protections, restrict public services, and, most importantly, eliminate programs aimed at ensuring universal access to food or other essential goods. Between 1981 and 2004, 123 countries (82 percent of the world's population) were forced to implement SAPs. Economic policy for the majority of humanity came to be determined by bankers and technocrats in Washington*."[94]

It's worth clarifying that the so-called "Global South," despite being dominated by oceans on the world map, is not just the area south of the equator. It extends from Latin America, Africa, and Asia far to the north, representing, by far, the majority of the world's population. But international banks function like any corporation. In the IMF, 85 percent of the world's population holds only 45 percent of the votes; as in any corporate boardroom, the more money you have, the more votes you get. In reality, it's like any hijacked democracy. American democracy, for example, also emerged under the same criteria, conditioned on the exclusion of ordinary people (non-white and without significant property) from real decision-making power.

This kind of factual and documented analysis of history is always dismissed as exaggerated, radical, and even condemned or outright banned. However, apart from being courageous, it is correct. As Karl Marx explained in *Capital*, wealth and capital are not the same, although both tend toward accumulation. Capitalism (the system and the culture surrounding capital) demanded the *reinvestment of surplus value* and the maximization of labor, detached (*alienated*) from the produced object and, as was the initial case in England, dispossessed of their land so that their children would become wage laborers. "*The separation of labor from its product,*

the separation of the subjective labor force from its objective condition, was the real foundation and starting point of capitalist production. […] The worker, therefore, constantly produces material wealth—objective wealth—but in the form of capital, that is, as an alien power that dominates and exploits them."[95] More than a hundred pages later: "*Today, industrial supremacy implies commercial supremacy. […] The creation of surplus value has become the sole objective of humanity*." Later, in an irony that resonates today, Marx observes that "*the only part of the so-called* national wealth *that truly forms part of the* collective possessions *of modern citizens is their* national debt[96]

This frenetic European process interrupted economic and civilizational development in other parts of the world, from the Americas to Asia. One might wonder whether this imposition of the new culture following feudalism would have been successful without a strong degree of fanaticism. I believe not, as in any other moment in history. Fanaticism (collective) is a fundamental component of all geopolitical and historical success, whether it be feudal wars, the imperial wars of capitalism, or the communism of the 20th century. The victor will impose their interests, their values, and create a new worldview, that is, a new normal, for which even their victims will defend with passion and conviction.

In the mid-19th century, Marx observed: "*The colonial system, with its public debts, heavy taxes, protectionism, and trade wars, is the result of the manufacturing revolution. All of which increases enormously during the infancy of modern industry. As a consequence, we have a great slaughter of the innocent*." Later, he adds: "*The American Civil War brought with it a colossal national debt and, with it, heavy tax pressure and the rise of the vile financial aristocracy […] In short, a faster concentration of capital. In other words, the great American republic has ceased to be the promised land for immigrant workers*."[97]

Postcapitalist Money. Financial Fantasy

IT IS VERY LIKELY THAT THE 21ST CENTURY will be the stage for social and geopolitical changes unlike anything we've seen in recent centuries. Even so, or perhaps because of this, colonialism, imperialism, and the obsession with "profits first" continue to be exercised in different ways, such as the maintenance of strategic national debts in the Global South and the

monopoly of global political and financial institutions like the IMF, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization, not to mention the powerful secret agencies of world powers and the equally powerful corporations and commercial lobbies, such as those of the perpetual war industry and trade.

There is a detail that is never mentioned: the difference between capital and power (of extortion), which is why, I believe, the current problem for the owners of money is not the lack of accumulated capital in the major financial centers but the opposite, the excess or, at least, a certain degree of excess accumulation that does not add coercive power (institutional, political, military) proportionally. After all, money, especially the global *fiat* currency since 1971, is nothing more than a symbol based primarily on faith. A kind of *inflation of power* that does not make it as effective as the owners of capital would desire.

Throughout history, capital has been accompanied by the development of repressive forces such as the police and armies. Imperial armies were responsible for wars, invasions, and international order. National armies were responsible for internal repression in their countries. At different times, the accumulation of capital had different powers of extortion through various policies, ideologies, and narratives that justified them. For example, at the birth of capitalism, the destruction of the superior economies of Asia and the massive exploitation of other colonies in Africa and Latin America required the direct intervention of European armies. A little over a century ago, the practice by Washington was called "Dollar Diplomacy," by which poor countries were forced to take on debts knowing they could not repay them and, consequently, Washington and its corporations had to invade those banana republics. A moral duty, a sacrifice of the civilized race to bring order to republics that did not know how to govern themselves.

For the past few decades, especially since the 1980s, the repetition of imperial and colonialist practices has been based on the *creation of unpayable debts* in the Global South. Almost all created as aid to friendly dictatorships. These debts are a fantastic business for financial centers, since while money can be created by pressing the "0" key in a bank and creating debt out of thin air to lend to a real individual, wealth cannot be created in the same way, as if by magic: *debtors* are necessary. The salaried worker who buys a house to pay for it over thirty years, the small business owner who requests a loan and the bank grants it by inventing money it does not

have, must repay it with interest. (Not without irony, to ensure that the worker can "repay it," the bank reviews their financial history and payment capacity, to avoid credit bubbles). To cancel that debt, the debtor must produce something to earn some money and thus cancel their debt by paying interest that the bank pockets on capital it never had.

The same happens with indebted countries in the South. Since they cannot print dollars or press the 0-Key, they must produce *real* goods and services to acquire dollars, which they will largely deposit in the coffers of the IMF or some other creditor in the North. It is the way a productively deficient North has to extract the creation of wealth from countries that do not manage the financial dictatorship.

Since the 1970s, and more radically today, the problem for financial centers is not the lack of capital but the placement of excess accumulation in peripheral countries. The excess accumulation of wealth has not been accompanied by the same coefficient of accumulation of extortion, which is why it is necessary to divert part of that accumulation and invest it not only to make more money but, even more importantly, to strengthen its weakened power of extortion. What value does money have, what power does a bank have if its debtors cannot repay their loans? What value does a millionaire's fortune have if there is no mass of needy people to serve them with services and protect them with their political support or with their fear and obedience? Real power is a power of coercion and subjugation that the creditor exercises over its debtors, even overriding the most basic human rights. Creditors are more interested in the relationship of servitude (that is, of power) than in the money itself.

These mega capitalist institutions are not interested in having reserves accumulated in their coffers. What would they want this for, like any family? Although it may be hard to imagine (because for the common mortal the economic drama is always the lack of money, not its excess) for the most powerful the problem is not so much that it is lacking but that it is overflowing in the bank's vault. Money in a chest is not money. It's paper. It only begins to fly when it is spent, when it is invested, when an international conflict arises and the business of national security, war, or the "right to defend ourselves" needs to be financed. Where is the greatest value of accumulated money if not in the possibility of making its coercive force effective over the rest of the servants? Without the need for servants, money becomes paper, worthless digits. That's why it must be circulated.

Now, the debt of the U.S. government is someone else's credit. It is the conditional credit of some countries and of the large U.S. corporations. Does anyone know of a megacorporation in debt? When U.S. corporations go bankrupt, as happened with the banks and automakers in 2008, the government bails them out. In 2009, the most important automakers in the country were nationalized, and after they recovered, they were handed back to those successful businessmen who had bankrupted them, not to the workers or the rest of the population who rescued them with their taxes.

DEBT AND NEOCOLONIALISM

The (First) Dollar Diplomacy

AFTER GOVERNING THE PHILIPPINES for three years, William H. Taft was appointed Secretary of War in 1904 and, shortly after, appointed himself governor of Cuba to "stabilize the island." Once elected president of the United States, Taft, sent the Marines to occupy Cuba and the Dominican Republic once again, under the framework of those countries' constitutions (written in Washington). To improve accounting, the National City Bank of New York took possession of the National Bank of Haiti. Taft declared with the authority of experience: "The day is not far off when our flag will cover from the North Pole to the South Pole, passing through the Panama Canal. The entire hemisphere will be ours due to our racial superiority. In fact, it already is, by the force of our morality."98

In the 1912 election campaign, the progressive candidate Woodrow Wilson criticized his predecessors for promoting imperialist policies and accused President Taft of abusing dollar diplomacy, summarized in the phrase "substituting bullets for dollars." According to Wilson on the campaign trail, it was unfair to pressure the poor republics of the south to take loans from Wall Street knowing that the Marines would force them to pay debts inflated by interest. Wilson's anti-imperialist promise of "not taking an inch more of foreign land" was replaced by treaties and leases forced by the need for debt. In 1905, Washington had occupied the Dominican Republic, it was declared, to control the Caribbean country's external debt. Eleven years later, President Wilson sent 750 Marines to protect the country from a possible German occupation. Three years later, in 1914, Nicaragua signed the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty, by which the

Wilson administration introduced an amendment similar to the Platt Amendment in Cuba, to ensure the island an independence without independence. Nicaragua became another protectorate, handing over for ninety-nine years two islands and recognizing the right of the United States to install military bases on its territory. Additionally, the agreement stated, Nicaragua "grants in perpetuity to the Government of the United States, free at all times from any tax or other public charge, the exclusive and proprietary rights, necessary and convenient for the construction, operation, and maintenance of an interoceanic canal..." The lease cost the United States three million Nicaraguan pesos, which were deducted from the debt that the Central American country maintains with the banks of the civilized world.

Your debts are your problem; mine, too

THESE ARE JUST EXAMPLES OF A RECURRING PRACTICE and a logic that continues today with other narratives. The goal of sovereign debt is to maintain dependency to the greatest extent possible. On one hand, banks only possess ten percent of all the money they lend, functioning as vacuums of production and resources from debtors. On the other hand, and at the international level, the main goal is not for indebted countries to pay their debts. The World Bank and the IMF are not interested in having reserves accumulated in their coffers. Why would they want this, like any family? Although it may be hard to imagine, because for ordinary mortals the economic drama is always their lack of money, for the most powerful the problem is not a lack of money but an excess of it. Where does the greatest value of accumulated money lie if not in the possibility of making its coercive force effective over the rest of the servants? Without the need for servants, money becomes paper, worthless digits. The countries of the Global South, especially the indebted neocolonies, are forced to grow above the interest rates of their own debts. Grow to pay. Grow to export resources. This, in turn, radicalizes the dogma of unlimited economic growth that is destroying the planet and social and international relations.

But since *growth* basically means *the expansion of private profits for capitalist corporations* (whose side effects, at best, may mean some marginal

wage increases), if a country does not grow, the other option is to privatize all its assets and holdings, as happened with the neoliberal prescriptions imposed by international banks under Washington's influence in the Global South in the 70s, in Russia from the 90s onwards, and even in the United States, though not with as much success as in the rest of the world.

When the oil crisis occurred in the 70s, the excess dollars of some Arab countries ended up in the big European and American banks. In turn, this *excess liquidity* created a problem for those banks, forcing them to pressure their friendly dictatorships in Africa and Latin America to take on more debt as if it were free money. Exactly the same thing had happened when, at the beginning of the century, the policy of gunboat diplomacy was replaced by dollar diplomacy (with the gunboat in reserve, as a material backup). The goal of so many overflowing loans was not for the countries of the backyard to pay, but exactly *the opposite*. Non-payment ensured Washington and American capital free intervention in those countries. For the world banks, controlled by Europeans and, above all, Americans, as in any other capitalist-imperialist institution, the goal is not to put safe capital to sleep but to circulate it as risk capital, where the greatest risk is not borne by the central investors but by the peripheral countries and their workers.

American debt is in its own currency, so if it wants to pay it, it only needs to print dollars, and if it doesn't want to, it doesn't pay. Third-world countries must produce something to buy dollars and pay their debts.[xliv] To make matters worse, there is the recourse to the *food war*. The idea of the World Bank and the IMF is that no country should produce its own food.[99] They must export and import it, and the transaction must be done in dollars, something that "the dictator" Muammar Gaddafi tried to change in 1999 with his idea of an African Union. We all know how that

[xliv] Even so, the governments that managed to cancel debts with the vultures of the IMF and the World Bank were those demonized as socialist or leftist. Argentina managed to cancel most of its debt during the Kirchner governments (*El País* of Madrid, January 3, 2006). In 2015, the successful businessman elected president, Mauricio Macri, reversed this achievement with a stroke of the pen and bypassing the legal process of indebtedness, plunging Argentina into over 50 billion dollars of debt and blaming the previous administration, as the manual dictates. Lula's Brazil also managed to pay off its debt to the IMF. On August 6, 2011, in Colombia, President Lula summarized: "*After two years of government, we returned 16 billion dollars that we owed. Today the IMF owes us 14 billion dollars that we lent them to help with the crisis in rich countries*". (Semana.com, August 13, 2011).

ended. With a rebellion orchestrated like the one that created Panama in 1903.

Coercion through an inoculated rebellion or a coup d'état to remove the dangerous leader, like the democratically elected Mohammed Mossadegh in Iran in 1953 (for nationalizing the oil industry), Jacobo Árbenz in Guatemala in 1954 (for nationalizing a small portion of land), Sukarno in Indonesia in 1967 (for being non-aligned), Salvador Allende in Chile in 1973 (for setting the bad example of a declared socialist elected at the polls), as in the case of overly independent dictators like Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, or a massive military invasion to remove another dictator-leader who threatened to replace the dollar with the euro, Saddam Hussein in 2003, among many other examples, illustrates the recourse to direct military and technological violence by the Free World to maintain its geopolitical, economic, financial, ideological, and cultural hegemony. Other, more indirect forms resort to sanctions and economic blockades. Still other, even more indirect forms, though derived from trade sanctions (Cuba, Venezuela) and judicial actions on the external debts of countries, consist of forcing them to devalue their currencies (trade and international credit blockades), since the devaluation of national currencies only meant that workers receive less pay with virtual increases.

Forgive our sins

THE FEUDAL-CAPITALIST DICHOTOMY of "feudal lord" vs. The dichotomy of "feudal lord" vs. "absolutist state" has much in common with the conflict in ancient Rome between the oligarchy and the Roman emperors. According to economist Michael Hudson, an expert in the history of debt, all previous societies, from the Sumerian, Babylonian, Egyptian, and Jewish (from the Rosetta Stone to the Bible, from the prophets of the Old Testament to Jesus), had the principle and custom of periodic debt amnesties to prevent the destruction of the social fabric. In fact, the meaning of the Statue of Liberty in New York holding a torch comes, like everything, from the past. In this case, it was the symbol used since Babylon, from Hammurabi, to decree that, from that moment, all debts were canceled and society could function freely, unshackled. That was the meaning of

freedom. Free from sins, that is, free from debts. The same was true in Hebrew societies. The words "sin" and "debt" were equivalent, until biblical translations in Europe eliminated the second meaning in prayers like "forgive our *sins*." In the Old Testament, there is no Paradise or Hell, and the prayer rather meant "forgive our *debts*."[xlv] The same reasoning was used by Socrates in *The Republic* of Plato and expressed by the rest of Greek culture: the rich, sick with greed, are as dangerous to society as a psychopath with a powerful weapon. The solution is to take it away from them.

This biblical tradition and Socratic reasoning were applied to civilized Germany after Nazism: its debts were forgiven. Not to mention the debt forgiveness that a small country like Uruguay, by decision of its president Baltasar Brum, granted to the kneeling French Empire after the First World War. Or the debt that took Haiti a century to pay to the same European empire, for its audacity to be the first free republic in America and, moreover, a republic of free Black people. The former colonies did not fare as well with the universal benevolence of the North, quite the opposite. Generally, modern empires demanded forgiveness from their slaves and colonies while the slaveholders and colonists received compensation for the loss of their property, that is, their slaves.[xlvi]

Hudson argues that the first two societies to interrupt the millennia-old tradition of forgiving abusive or unpayable debts were the Greek and Roman. The Roman oligarchy assassinated their top leaders when they felt threatened by a debt amnesty for the people, something that reverberates in more contemporary history. Hudson himself worked in the 1960s for banks like Chase Manhattan Bank, which needed to know how much money Latin American countries could save to demand a maximum debt payment quota, making any form of development impossible. The same applies to African countries.

[xlv] Bart Ehrman, like other prominent experts in biblical studies, "*Our opinion that you die and your soul goes to heaven or hell is nowhere to be found in the Old Testament, and it is not what Jesus preached*". ("Heaven And Hell Are Not What Jesus Preached". NPR, March 31, 2020).

[xlvi] In English, "*forgive*" (to forgive), comes from *give*, meaning "to give," to lose, to renounce a debt, while "forget" (to forget), although it can refer to *get*, to obtain something, etymologically refers to "losing the power" of something. In any case, although seemingly opposite, both forgiving and forgetting indicate a loss or a renunciation in favor of someone else.

Aid for progress—of our hegemony

IN 1947, WASHINGTON PRODUCED the Marshall Plan for the economic recovery of Western Europe, including its enemies Italy and Germany up to three years prior, with assistance of 13 billion dollars (170 billion at 2023 value). With the same goal of vaccinating another continent against "the communist threat," Washington presented its Alliance for Progress plan for Latin America fourteen years later. Among its stated objectives were "*the establishment of democratic governments*," "*economic and social planning*," "*agrarian reform*," and a "*more equitable distribution of income*." All traditional demands of socialists in Latin America. The language was meant to truly attract millions of Latin Americans dissatisfied with the reality created by dictatorships supported by U.S. governments and transnational corporations for several generations, but both the history before the declaration of intentions and the reality that followed contradicted these very words.

The true objective of the Marshall Plan was to dispose of a surplus after the catastrophic war that could be absorbed and turned into consumers by the old empires of Europe and Japan, now reduced to ashes. It was necessary to avoid the much-feared collapse of Wall Street and investors, as in 1929, when Washington had a considerable surplus and the insatiable investors could not bite enough.

Since the 19th century, U.S. corporations had reversed popular demands in the Third World through coups and friendly dictatorships, demands that later turned into socialist or communist claims. With the withdrawal of U.S. Marines from the "Backyard" due to the Great Depression of the 1930s and F.D. Roosevelt's "Good Neighbor Policy," a dozen Latin American countries regained their democracies. All of them were destroyed after Washington, the CIA, and U.S. corporations began reinvesting in Latin American armies. Both democracies and more planned economies, as well as agrarian reforms, were systematically dismantled. It would suffice to recall the case of Guatemala in 1954, but the same happened in all other countries that attempted something similar. The very promoter of the Alliance for Progress, President Kennedy, three years earlier (1959), as a senator, had assured: "*I do not believe that granting this aid to South America is strengthening it against the Soviet Union. But the armies there are the most important institutions, and it is important for us to have a*

link in the number of countries involved. That is worth the 67 million we are sending them; it is a waste in a military sense, but in the political sense, we hope they make effective use of it."[100]

After the signing of this new plan in 1961, in Punta del Este, much of this *aid* not only served to increase the profits of foreign companies that were transferred to the United States, but Kennedy himself and successive presidents encouraged invasions, coups d'état against all those democratic governments that attempted any agrarian reform and real democratization of their countries. In the following decade alone, Washington invaded the Dominican Republic (1965) and destroyed or supported the destruction of democracies hostile to foreign free enterprise in Honduras (1963), Ecuador (1963), Bolivia (1964), Brazil (1964), Guyana (1964), Argentina (1966), and Chile (1973). By that last year, the dozen democracies that Latin America had regained since the 1940s, thanks to Washington's negligence, first occupied by its Great Depression and then by World War II, had been completely erased, and in their place, brutal military and liberal dictatorships were planted, naturally obedient and functional to foreign capital—all in the name of defending national sovereignty.

As a symbolic and propagandistic gesture, in 2005 the IMF, responsible for neoliberal catastrophes in Africa and Latin America, forgave the debt of 19 ruined countries worth $2.79 billion, which represented a third of the debt of one of them, Bolivia, and a tiny, ridiculous fraction of the wealth forcibly transferred from that poor country to "developed countries" over several centuries. Not to mention the right that country and all others should have to compensation for multiple coups d'état encouraged by Washington and its corporations in the last century alone. Not to mention the astronomical sums transferred from other countries and continents to the intelligent and civilized world. Of course, according to history, it is the victims who pay compensation to their abusers, not the other way around.

This brutal theft is not a thing of the past. Currently, resorting to more sophisticated means such as finance and investments, $1.1 trillion (almost three times the economy of Argentina or 20 times the economy of Congo or Uruguay) is transferred annually from developing countries to developed countries through capital that avoids paying taxes and takes

refuge in the well-known tax havens—which, by a mysterious coincidence, are almost all former British colonies.[xlvii]

Below and on the margins

THE FINAL STAGE OF CAPITALIST COLONIALISM has reached its maximum expression of abstraction through the debts of nations that have ceased to be sovereign to suffer the demands of private transnational corporations, now sovereign. It is the servitude of *indenture* (unpaid labor or *ponguismo* in the Andean world), what was called "voluntary slavery" in the 19th century and "wage slavery" later, which chains not only individuals but nations. In the Anglo-Saxon world, the former white masters and their slave plantations became admired companies in the "private equity" or "investment capital" sector, where a corporation dedicates itself to buying the debt of struggling countries "to save them" from the problems created by other private corporations with the help of their own governments and their own central banks, such as the Fed or "development banks" like the World Bank or the IMF, institutions over which Washington maintains veto power as a weapon of coercion—legalized.[xlviii]

Typically, these corporations rake in billions by purchasing just a portion of the shares of other companies or countries—enough to maintain total control. Once they've extracted the profits, they move on in search of another dying animal to squeeze for maximum gain with the least possible investment. In other words, it's the money industry. When things don't go as planned, they turn to the governments of wealthy countries, which, to save them, print more paper money (or simply add a few zeros to bank accounts) and rely on the judicial systems of their dominant nations. This was the case with the Vulture Funds that sued Argentina to force it to pay without restructuring its debt, partly generated in the 70s and 90s by loans to "friendly dictatorships" and "neoliberal democracies"

[xlvii] Global Financial Integrity has calculated that, between 2004 and 2013, the *illicit financial flows* from the Global South to the developed North amounted to 8.7 trillion dollars (or nearly three times the economy of Brazil).

[xlviii] In 1983, the racist government of South Africa created the *Development Bank of Southern Africa*. In the 1970s, a social movement in England had led a campaign to boycott banks in South Africa, as a way to pressure against apartheid in that country.

that led the country to the 2001 crisis. Partly due to the coercive power of these same vulture funds, so named for their habit of buying bonds from financially troubled countries at ten percent of their value only to later demand one hundred percent of the value, plus interest. In other words, they extract wealth produced by the very countries they've indebted, but at a higher rate of expropriation. Some of these money industry companies include Kohlberg Kravis Roberts, Black Stone Inc., CVC, etc. All with assets exceeding the GDP of many countries and with the status of sovereign entities like any nation, but backed by the laws of dominant countries.

Between 1960 and 1995, and after all the plans and loans from development banks and First World development programs, the gap between debtors and creditors grew by 40 to 90 percent. It accelerated shortly afterward when debtor countries sank into economic and social crises due to the neoliberal policies imposed by the lending North. In 1986, the revolutionary leader Thomas Sankara summarized it in his July 1987 speech during the assembly of the Organization of African Unity summit in Addis Ababa: "*The debt cannot be paid; if we don't pay, none of our creditors will die, but if we pay, it is we who will die.*"[101] Three months later, he was assassinated, and the revolution in Burkina Faso was reversed, following the old model of *independence revolution-coup d'état-dictatorship in the name of freedom*.

Since their origins in the 20th century, the debts of the Third World have been paid two and three times over without ever being canceled. Let's set aside the pharaonic fortunes owed to their plunderers; similarly, state compensations have always gone to the masters who lost their slaves and never to the slaves. By 2022, as a reward for the crisis caused by the Covid pandemic two years earlier, these same countries had to pay the highest interest rates in decades. Many poor countries spend more on debt interest payments (called "*debt services*") than on educating their children.[102] As has been the case for centuries and despite the rhetoric of salvation and development, the poverty and precariousness of labor in poor countries are not a problem for rich countries but a solution. It's big business. Otherwise, raw materials would become more expensive, and competition would increase significantly. This is without considering the always-ignored externalities of good business, such as the effects of global pollution by rich countries that disproportionately impact poor countries.

On the other hand, debts in Europe and the United States don't matter. At least for now, as long as they maintain military dominance over

the world and faith in the global currency remains thanks to media sermons and preaching. Every few years, in the United States, the media and politicians warn of a government *default*. This threat is a domestic war narrative: everyone knows that, as always, the opposition party will vote to raise the debt ceiling again, which, like Manhattan, has no height limit, but in exchange, they'll negotiate some political concessions. The debt of dominant countries doesn't matter because money can always be created, and the Cantillon effect *can be triggered* (the closer one is to the creation of *fiat* currency, the less inflation is suffered; another reason why the gap between rich and poor keeps growing).[xlix]To keep the population distracted by the political circus, the opposition will repeat that fiscal discipline is necessary, something the United States and Europe have never had, as if it were the economy of a household where responsible adults don't spend more than they earn. As we've already explained, this rhetoric and practice are imposed on debtor nations of the Global South through loans from international banks controlled by the central countries. But it's not a logic that the powerful and the *creators of money out of thin air* apply to themselves.

Another example of extreme planning and state and corporate centralization in the "free world" was the forceful imposition of the Washington Consensus (dismantling the welfare state, privatization, deregulation, liberalization) through the coercion of the IMF on indebted Third World countries during the second half of the Cold War, thanks to two factors: 1) the imposition of loans from U.S. banks in countries with friendly dictatorships, established in the first half of the Cold War, which took on debt to alleviate the excess liquidity of banks in London and New York due to the transfer of petrodollars from OPEC during the oil crisis, and 2) the historic rise in interest rates by the Federal Reserve in Washington to curb inflation in the North, which made the debts of the South unpayable and turned their people into new slaves, something the new democracies barely disguised.

From 1980 to the mid-1990s (amid the neoliberal boom fueled by the sale of public assets and even before the Great Crisis of 2000), the number of people surviving on less than five dollars a day increased by one billion. Deregulation increased informal work (without tax payments or

[xlix] This effect was described by the Franco-Irish economist Richard Cantillon, decades before Adam Smith began fantasizing about a perfectly free market in an abstract society.

social benefits). All the countries forced to apply the miraculous recipes of the technocrats from the rich North saw their poverty increase by 50 percent to double in just a few years. Everywhere there were marches and popular protests, from Venezuela to India, with no results. Some economists from the World Bank, like Nobel Prize winner Joseph E. Stiglitz, acknowledged and denounced that all the countries that adopted the recipes of their banks collapsed at a high cost to the economy and democracy in those countries they claimed to help. However, none of them ever had to face trial, nor were there any economic compensations for the victims. Why? First, because it's a tradition, dating back to before the abolition of slavery, when those who received compensation were always the masters, not the slaves. Second, because that's what the laws they themselves wrote say: the International Organizations Immunities Act of 1945 (a U.S. federal law passed in 1945) establishes that certain foreign groups operating in the country are exempt from some taxes and possess immunity from legal action and protection of property and assets against any confiscation. Both the IMF and the World Bank were covered by this law. Only in 2019 did the U.S. Supreme Court rule that, in some cases, the World Bank could be subject to lawsuits if financial damages were proven.[103] An extremely exceptional situation that will soon be neutralized with new laws.

Modern Slavery

IT'S NOT THAT THE SACRED MARKET can't pay workers better, but that it's not convenient. A person in a state of need (tied to debt or poverty) is a modern slave—docile, manipulable, functional. Exactly like indebted countries—the poor debtors, not the rich ones.

Why do farmers in Colombia, responsible for producing nearly 80 percent of the world's cocaine market, earn a thousand dollars a year, while a single kilo of cocaine sells for $150,000 in the United States? The dogmatic answer is one of the greatest scams of the capitalist world, repeated in other sectors, from agriculture and industry to the professions: wages respond to "the Law of Supply and Demand."

If wages in any production chain were dictated solely by this law, the hardest jobs at the base of the pyramid (where the labor supply is lower

than at higher levels) or specialists in academic or scientific elites would, by far, be the best-paid positions. The reason lies in the same pyramid of power, justified by a plethora of propagandistic excuses emanating from the micro-class in power and reproduced in its functional links, from managers, assistant managers, public relations experts, communicators, propagandists, politicians, mercenaries, stewards, laborers, to beggars. Everything fossilized in institutions (governments, congresses, media, schools, universities, churches, clubs, armies, police) that guarantee the sanctity of private property as if the existence of a palace and a shack were proof of the universality of this right.

Beyond the capitalist rationale that always pushes for cost reduction at the bottom and profit maximization at the top, there is a need to keep marginalized groups in a *state of perpetual production through necessity*, such as debt or poverty itself. This perpetual state of need dehumanizes to the point of conditioning the slave to become a slave master as a reward for their own sacrifice, something that, if lucky, the one percent achieves and is then celebrated on magazine covers and in parents' lessons to their young children—not because all parents believe this historical fiction, but because they must prepare their children to survive in a dehumanized world.

If those semi-enslaved workers in Colombia had higher wages and better living conditions, they would likely educate themselves and migrate to other sectors of production and services—the same illegality that makes the product expensive also makes the producers cheap.

The same happens (just to give one more example) with slave labor in various regions of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In many cases, the unpaid slaves of the 19th century were better fed and less poisoned than today's African workers, from the cobalt mines of Congo to the electronic waste mountains of Ghana and Tanzania, or the native loggers of Mozambique, with whom I lived in the 90s. Undoubtedly, in the 19th century, the social gap between slaves and their masters, though obscene, was not as vast as the one that exists today between the producers (called free men and women) and the masters of transnational corporations.

As British professor Siddharth Kara exposed in his recent book *Cobalt Red* (2023), currently hundreds of thousands of Congolese and tens of thousands of children are subjected to the worst forms of known slavery to extract cobalt with a shovel or their bare hands. For a wage of seven dollars a day when they're lucky (and two dollars on a normal day), these

men, women, and children develop various illnesses because cobalt is toxic even on contact with the skin. Not to mention that those seven dollars barely allow a family to eat inadequately, while the long and painful work prevents their children from going to school or having a dignified childhood.

Cobalt is essential for the rechargeable batteries of phones, computers, and cars worldwide, and 75 percent of it is extracted from Congo, a country that not only has one of the worst records of imperialist massacres but also brutal dictatorships following the assassination of the great Patrice Lumumba by the Belgians in complicity with the CIA, as could only be expected. All in the name of the noble defense of capital, private property (of the rich), and the progress of developed countries.

Currently, the primary beneficiaries of this new violation of Congo are corporations like Apple, Tesla, Samsung, and Chinese investors who realized the great business opportunity over a decade ago. Next are the global consumers, most of whom ignore or prefer to ignore the existence of modern slaves. The first victims are the hundreds of thousands of enslaved Congolese and the global ecosystem, as large areas of natural forests have been and continue to be eliminated for this mining activity—the classic *externalities* that never factor into the equation of any successful business.

The mere fact that artisanal mining is illegal, like cocaine production, is irrelevant. For the purposes of this analysis, we must return to the same question from the beginning: if Congolese slaves are essential in the cobalt supply chain and essential to the functioning of our digital world, why are their wages below the minimum conditions for survival and their rights below those of slaves from centuries past?

Because dehumanization is a profitable business: dehumanization of producers and dehumanization of consumers. And then they're surprised that Artificial Intelligence might one day take over the world? Isn't this a First World panic, much like the idea that they will cease to be parasitic empires? What difference does it make to a modern slave, or even to the global middle class, whether they are dominated by robots or continue to be dominated and exploited by the same old human elites?

We must return to the same explanation: maintaining a mass of the population in a state of need is essential to keeping power at the top of the pyramid. Every so often, this brutality encounters some legal limit, the result of years of social activism, but these limits are not part of the logic

that governs the world. Instead, they are the reason why not everyone has forgotten that there is something called human dignity—which, not by mere coincidence, always has to fight against the immeasurable powers (economic, political, and media) of those at the top—and with the complicity, indifference, or amnesia of a few of those at the bottom.

THE ABSTRACT EMPIRE OF THE DOLLAR

The novel illusion of equality

AS WE SAW EARLIER, FROM ITS BIRTH capitalism was the imposition of the expulsion of peasants from their land and the accumulation of rentiers through an abstract system based on market laws regulated by the owners of the market and the institutions (including the Tudor and Stuart monarchies) that consolidated the commodification of human life. For the first time in human history, land became a commodity and was subject to buying and selling; consequently, the same happened to the labor of the displaced. It was then that, for the first time in history, a real estate market and a labor market existed. It was also the first time that economic crises began to occur without external causes—in Postcapitalism, in the extreme stage of the abstraction of power, we have financial crises created by the empire of finance itself.

Capitalism ended the free market. A minority benefited from an abstraction that, through the new rent system based on variable market prices and the enclosure (privatization) of a third of communal lands, forcibly displaced peasants from their lands and forced them to "freely" offer themselves for rent as workers in the big cities. From the beginning, a central element of this relationship is *asymmetry*. This always existed in other systems, but the asymmetry of feudalism and slavery, for example, was clear and visible. As brutal as they were, they were still humanized. The noble and the vassal, the master and the slave were not the same thing, and both knew it and accepted it as a decision of God or nature.[104]

Capitalism preserved this asymmetry but, in its process of abstraction and illusionism, not only did it turn reality into something intangible and unattainable for the former vassal, but it also managed to impose the idea that both the employee and the employer, the debtor and the creditor,

the empire and the colony, the developed and the underdeveloped countries were playing the same game under the same rules. As in a game of chess or soccer, it was assumed that the best had won and their privileges were due to their own merits. It remains a historical paradox (that is, a masked logic) that it was the British who invented *fair play* and, in general, the Anglo-Saxons who consider themselves the champions of living in civilized countries where the law is respected. That is, not all men were created equal. Some had more merit than others—indeed, some were white.

On the other hand, this illusion was in line with the new ideas that had emerged in opposition to capitalism itself: the ideas of equality and freedom, the claims of those at the bottom as being born equal and with the same rights as those at the top.[1] This contradiction between discourse and reality materialized, in an insurmountable way, with the Revolution of the Thirteen Colonies, with its Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, and with its constitution in 1789. But in practice, neither "*We the People*" included blacks, Indians, poor whites, and women, nor did "*all men are created equal*" apply in the lives of those who wrote those beautiful phrases, as was the case with the wealthy slaveholders Thomas Jefferson and George Washington.

One of the most common molds in American patriotic discourse, often repeated in the mass media through interviews and documentaries, even by African American analysts, is to condone the contradiction of the Founding Fathers, such as their speeches on democracy and equality while they maintained hundreds of slaves as private property and supported the expulsion of Native Americans from their own lands to expand freedom. The most common justification lies in the fact that Jefferson had postponed the abolition of slavery in order to build "*the American project*." The radical question is simple: What did, what does the famous American project consist of? The politically correct answer, as it was in the mouths of the southern congressmen who fought to expand slavery, is: "in the expansion of democracy and freedom." Not only does history absolutely contradict this narrative, but the question is answered by the very example of

[1] After being proposed by Pythagoras and Plato in ancient Greece and, to some extent, practiced by early Christians during their persecution, the strange idea that all individuals are equal was taken up more than a thousand years later by thinkers like John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Like Thomas Jefferson, John Locke did not practice his own ideals, leaving the sacrifice to future generations.

Jefferson and other "founding fathers": the *American project* consists of *suspending any law (civil or moral) when it contradicts our particular interests*.

This supreme law, never written for obvious reasons and above all other laws, has been applied since the very first day of the founding of the United States, beginning with the violence against the Indigenous nations that had been displaced beyond the Appalachians, and it has never ceased to be applied to this day, when the economic rise of another potential nation (Argentina in the 1930s, the Soviet Union in the second half of the 20th century, and now China) is seen as a threat that must be eradicated before it flourishes. From the first day of its existence as a country (and long before as an Anglo-Saxon colony) until very recently, multiple agreements were signed with Indigenous nations, which were only respected as long as it served the Anglo settlers and the government in Washington to buy time before seizing more land and resources, all in the name of the classic excuse of having been "attacked first" and exercising the "right to defend ourselves" from our own provocations, manipulation of the narrative, religious and media preaching, which justified and continue to justify new thefts and invasions. Every one of the political and geopolitical actions of the United States to this day has its roots in its founding and even earlier, in its treatment and mistreatment of the dispossessed Indigenous peoples under a plethora of excuses and demonized by all means with the aim of justifying themselves before God, before the rest of the world, and, above all, before themselves.

For its part, the progenitor European imperialism, which colonized and enslaved half the planet, established an asymmetrical relationship in terms of opportunities for development and freedom. American imperialism did not change that relationship, but adapted its narrative to the exact opposite: in the name of *freedom*, imposition; in the name of *democracy*, dictatorships; in the name of the *rule of law*, violation of all laws, contracts, and agreements that ceased to be advantageous; in the name of the *fight against corruption*, corruption on an industrial scale, both the legalized corruption within its borders and the illegal corruption in the rest of its friendly dictatorships and satellite democracies; in the name of *human rights*, secret and lawless prisons, torture, persecution, and death.

All peoples, cultures, and civilizations are formed from a foundational moment that determines their psychological and cultural DNA. To understand the entire history of the United States and the present, one must understand its initial relationship with Indigenous peoples first, with

Black slaves and Mexicans later, and with the rest of the world even later. The first formation of its character was its permanent suspicion of the hostility of the neighbor whose land was being stolen in the name of a *theory and right of property* based on *improvement* (increased productivity) articulated in England by John Locke in the 17th century and later by the classical liberal economists. Why do they attack us if we only steal their unproductive land? That was essentially the discourse of President Andrew Jackson before Congress in 1932.[105]

Peaceful coexistence was only accepted when it was a recognition by the dispossessed of Anglo-Saxon power as dictator (in the name of democracy, freedom, and civilization), seeking an excuse to attack the supposedly inferior peoples and expand over them in the name of "self-defense" and a narrative of reality at the whim of the aggressor. Its model and intellectual habit was the sermon and religious preaching that always override any factual reality by the sheer force of faith and weekly, if not daily, repetition. For this hegemonic mentality, as for a pride of lions or a pack of hyenas, there is no room for a second alpha male.

There is no possibility of recognizing the *rights of others*, whether they are indigenous peoples, dangerous slaves, Mexican hybrids, corrupt Europeans, demonic Soviets, or, more recently, successful Chinese. For this culture, the word *competition* is just that, a word; the concept that a negotiation (despite, or because of, their proud tradition of the businessman) could include a *mutual benefit* for the parties. If there is no preemptive attack, *the other* will exterminate us as we exterminate our inferiors. It is no coincidence that many white American citizens are so concerned that, due to recent waves of immigration, they might one day become minorities, because they assume they will be treated as they have always treated minorities in *their* country. No different from when, at the end of the 19th century, the European powers and the emerging global power, the United States, after colonizing and exploiting half the planet, discovered that most of the world was not white and panicked, developing theories like "racial replacement," which assumed that the subjects wanted to exterminate the beautiful and superior race, so they had to exterminate or subjugate them first.

This is the world that, since the 17th century, has given lessons in freedom, democracy, and the equality of all human beings.

Long live the deficit

BY 1949, THE UNITED STATES had a problem that all peripheral economies would love to have: a surplus. That is, the government collected more than it spent. When a government has a surplus, the private sector has a deficit. Conversely, a government in debt means that its entrepreneurs and private businesses have a surplus or, at least, an extra margin that, in another way, they would not have. This raised some alarms among the power managers, as it reminded them of the surplus from exactly twenty years earlier, the capitalist binge of the Progressive Era, which was followed by the Hangover or Great Depression.

In the case of the United States, if we take a look at the historical statistics of deficits and surpluses, we will see that most of the time, a surplus was followed by an economic recession—and a war. Among the few surpluses we find is that of Andrew Jackson in 1830, which intensified the wars of dispossession against indigenous peoples and initiated the war against Mexico afterward. Both wars, passionately desired, both dispossessions doubled the territory of the never-satisfied settlers. In 1917, the progressive and anti-interventionist President Woodrow Wilson decided to enter World War I when it became clear that Washington would not have been able to collect the debts of England and its allies if Germany had won. Convincing American public opinion produced one of the first massive experiments in propaganda with scientific pretensions. In the 1920s and 1930s, Washington pressured the world's economies to open their markets to place its surplus, which it could invest massively during the Great Depression and, especially, in World War II. After World War II, Truman had to manage a surplus, and, almost automatically, the Korean War occurred. Another exceptional moment of surplus took place at the end of Bill Clinton's presidency, and George Bush made sure to turn it into a convenient deficit with the war in Iraq. In other words, deficits in Washington are only bad in political speeches, but they are desirable for anyone who manages the economy or the big businesses of this country.

Let's look at the specific case of the Korean War, which left 80 percent of that country in ruins under thousands of tons of bombs and countless war crimes that were never tried and will never be acknowledged by the self-satisfied collective conscience. Economists agree that, as was the case with World War II, though with less significant geopolitical

consequences, the Korean War was responsible for the economic boom of the 1950s and what are now called the "happy years" by the conservatives of today's Republican right. On the other hand, the inoculated Red Scare and the "fight against communism" intensified the approach of other countries to the orbit of the dollar.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the American surplus generated monetary scarcity and another classic capitalist crisis, as are economic crises and, more recently, financial ones. The Great Depression and, above all, the tragedy of World War II *solved the system's problem* until the creation of a new surplus in the late 1940s. From the 1950s to the early 1980s, Washington's deficit was largely due to its astronomical military spending. Wars are not only blessings for the arms industry and all its derivatives (secret agencies, private armies), but they also allow governments to reduce social spending without the population becoming outraged or daring to make any unpatriotic gesture, that is, any minimal act of civil disobedience. With exceptions, as was the case in the final years of the Vietnam War. In other words, wars and the creation of state deficits are often another form of citizen demobilization and privatization of essential services, such as health and education. Although private armies exist today, it is generally not possible to privatize the legal monopolies of violence like the military and the police. Everything else is on the market for the benefit of big capitalists and in the name of business freedom—of *freedom*. On the other hand, if the U.S. surplus before the Korean War had continued to grow with gold and dollars accumulated in Washington, the capital reserves in other countries would have diminished, and as a result, U.S. exports would have suffered at a time when the economy had not yet transitioned to a consumer-based model.

From any angle, the Korean War was a blessing—for private capital. If in the interwar period Washington pressured other countries using its *surplus*, after the Korean War and especially after the *de-convertibility* of the dollar, it continued to pressure the rest of the world with its *deficit*. The two fundamental forms of coercion were and are one known throughout the history of civilizations and the other known throughout the history of capitalism: (1) military force (plus the permanent and brutal plots of secret agencies, like the CIA and NSA) and (2) the force of a global currency, the dollar. Every time the harassed countries threatened to replace the dollar, they were threatened with military invasions, regime changes, the fear of not recovering their massive investments in Treasury

Bonds, the fear of a dollar that was too cheap due to excessive paper issuance in Washington that would reduce their savings (public and private), or the fear of a dollar that was too expensive, which would destroy the main sector of productive economies: the export of goods.

It is not a paradox but part of the propaganda logic that it is not and has never been the communist countries that harass and impose trade embargoes on other countries, nor is it the countries of the Global South that practice the massive subsidization of their own productive sector, but rather the Western countries that define themselves as the champions of freedom and the free market.

Dollar, Faith, and Trembling

BUT LET'S SEE WHAT HAPPENED IN THE 20TH CENTURY with the process of abstraction of the capitalist system that began in the 16th century in England. After World War II, the dollar displaced the British pound sterling as the global currency. For centuries, before England's sterling silver, the Spanish real (eight silver pesos or *Spanish Dollar*) fulfilled this role. For over two centuries, the Peso duro was the global currency, created and sustained through forced labor in the colonies, as was the case with the extraction of silver from Potosí in Bolivia from 1545 to 1820. Spanish pesos flooded the world, from China to the United States, in many cases causing inflation—not without the strategic *Cantillon effect*, which we explained earlier. But inflation in a global currency is a problem distributed among many nations, so it never becomes as severe in the country that issues it, the country that benefits from this radically asymmetrical economic relationship.

The issuance of money does not simply function as a lubricant for the economy but serves to *suck* wealth from the sectors, national or global, that produce more wealth than they receive in return in the form of currency. It is the power of abstraction, the power of the symbol, which is by no means a neutral medium but an instrument for transferring wealth to the group that administers it. Thanks to this *production of money*, Spain maintained a vast empire, which, nonetheless, did not prevent its population from suffering from increasing social inequality, poverty, and frequent government bankruptcies as it had to divert those resources to its

imperial wars. Not much different from what the United States experiences today. Empires are expensive.

The widespread practice of stealing silver and gold from the colonies to issue currency was the equivalent of the more recent imperialist resource of printing money in industrial quantities. Now, it's less about printing and more about creating money from a keyboard, as large commercial banks do when they issue debt and turn it into real debt for their eventual subjects, the debtors—a kind of hygienic and legalized money laundering.

But not all *fiat* currencies are created equal. The printing of paper money by the German government to pay war reparations generated a wave of hyperinflation in the 1920s, which, in turn, facilitated Hitler's rise to power by capitalizing on the anger, humiliation, and frustrations of the German people stemming from the Treaty of Versailles. The same has happened and continues to happen in weaker countries, such as in Africa and Latin America. An extreme case is Venezuela, whose government, blocked from selling its main product, oil, in the world's largest markets and denied access, by decree of Washington, to international credit (even to its own gold reserves deposited in London), was forced to print bolivars, ruining its currency and economy, driving millions into exile, and leaving, according to economist Jeffrey Sachs, tens of thousands dead solely as a result of the blockade.

Although essentially paper, the U.S. dollar, since its creation, was backed by silver and gold, but it wasn't until the Gold Standard Act of 1900 that the official conversion of one-fifth of its value to gold was established. In 1971, President Nixon wiped out that obligation and the rights of others with a single stroke. The Bretton Woods system, created after World War II to establish the dollar as the global currency in place of the British pound in 1944, ended with Nixon's decree, but its order did not. Calculated or not, it was a masterstroke. Once countries had accumulated dollars in their coffers, the last thing they wanted was for it to devalue, not only to maintain its reserve value but also to sustain their export opportunities. This is why every time Washington prints more and more dollars to finance its deficit and its *way of life*, countries that base their economies on exports (almost all of them) must go out and buy dollars to sustain their value, which, in turn, increases or maintains the holding of the currency based not only on faith but, above all, on fear. The last thing exporting countries (especially the indebted ones) want is for the dollar-based system

to collapse. A collapse of this system, "*would harm any country more than the United States itself due to the disproportionate weight of the international market in each country's economy*."[106]

In other cases, countries must convert their excess dollars into U.S. Treasury bonds, also out of mere faith and fear, which is nothing more than buying U.S. debt. Faith and propaganda claim that they are the safest bonds in the world, hence their name ("*security bonds*"), but history suggests otherwise—there is no debt that the United States is, in fact, obligated to repay.[li] On the other hand, if the U.S. Treasury prints an excess of dollars, or, more likely, if the Fed has commercial banks create money out of thin air through the sale of government bonds to pay for government expenses, this can create inflation as those dollars circulate within the country. Printing dollars to pay off mature bonds (short-term or long-term 30-year bonds) means that this money will go abroad in the medium term. This inflationary option doesn't worry ultra-wealthy investors as much, since they will acquire the capital created out of thin air long before the *fiat* capital produces inflation among the working or foreign population. Of course, everything has a limit, and it's better not to find out what it is.

By the late 1960s, Washington's blessed deficit had already surpassed its gold reserves, and the failed and genocidal war in Vietnam threatened to collapse the entire economy, just as other wars and genocides in the past had bankrupted the economies of other empires—such as Spain and Britain in the past. In the 60s, these reserves were being transferred to France and Germany through the convertibility system, and as a result, they were getting rid of the dollar.

The conversion of the dollar into a *fiat* currency was going to change several rules regarding deficits to maintain the same order. By then, different subsidiary governments, such as France and England, had converted a large portion of their dollar deposits into their gold value. The war in Vietnam had crossed the threshold of the desired war and threatened to bleed the U.S. economy and patriotism dry. The problem was not only that Washington lacked all the gold it was supposed to deliver in exchange for its dollars, but, much more importantly, that the countries in the process of reconstruction, from Europe to the colonies and the new

[li] In the United States, *treasury bonds* were used in 1812 and, especially, in 1917 as "War Bonds" ("War bonds", "*Victory* bonds" and "*Liberty* bonds"), to finance the country's entry into World War I. War has always been an excellent business.

independent republics, would stop using the dollar as a transaction currency among themselves.

The maneuver was quite obvious, though unimaginable. In 1971, the Nixon administration decided to officially detach the dollar from its gold value. Not only did it become an even more abstract and symbolic value than gold, but it also forced the rest of the countries that conducted transactions in dollars to maintain the status quo. From then on, beyond the dollar, there was nothing. The dollar became gold. Dollars for investment and development programs. Dollars to pay the infinite debts of the Global South countries.[lii] Moreover, Washington forced those countries to buy *more* newly printed U.S. Treasury Bonds. As economist Michael Hudson explained, in this way "*Washington's spending on the Cold War became a tax on foreign economies*."[107]

Over time and in a more radical way, like King Midas who turned everything he touched into gold, Washington simply printed dollars whenever it needed them. Pure magic. Couldn't be better. The only problem was that, just as King Midas turned his daughter into a golden statue with just a touch, Washington also turned human existence into dollars. Something that, of course, was not solely its responsibility but the final stage of a process that began in England four centuries earlier and that everyone knows as capitalism.

Like all faith and all fear, these must be sustained through sermons, preaching, and repetition, which in the commercial and political world is called *propaganda*. But faith and fear are things that are built and, especially in non-religious spheres, things that are quickly destroyed by some historical event. The conversion of the dollar into a *fiat* currency based on faith also had an impact on the United States, though less so than abroad. The measure was prompted by the decision of countries like France to convert their dollar reserves into gold, something that was allowed under the Bretton Woods system for countries but which F. D. Roosevelt had already prohibited for U.S. citizens during the Great Depression of the 30s. The immediate devaluation triggered an inflationary spiral in the 70s and the subsequent historic rise in interest rates by the Fed, which ruined even the friendly dictatorships of the South that Washington had supported with easy loans and, even, in the style of policies toward the

[lii] An unexplored result here would be the effects of this global monetary policy on the Soviet Union, which may have led to its "collapse" or suicide in 1990.

Backyard in the early decades of the 20th century, with the imposition of loans, perfect Trojan horses, all under the title of "Dollar Diplomacy."

Thanks to this catastrophe of sovereign debts in the 80s, many countries regained their formal democracies (naturally, no one ever spoke of "*The Fall of the American Wall*"), but these countries became trapped in the spiral of debts, interest, and more loans from other imperial institutions like the IMF and the World Bank.

Except for the price hikes of the 70s, the effect of Washington's fiscal irresponsibility did not destroy its economy but, in the long term, reinforced its imperial power. If in the 30s and 40s the United States imposed commercial conditions on other debtor countries, demanding the opening of markets to its products, from the 70s onward it continued to do *the same but from the opposite position*.

The measure was prompted by the decision of countries like France to convert their dollar reserves into gold (something that was allowed under the Bretton Woods system signed in 1944 by 44 countries) but which F. D. Roosevelt had already decreed the prohibition for U.S. citizens to convert dollars to gold during the Great Depression of the 1930s. In fact, he imposed the opposite. If this conversion had continued into the early 1970s, countries would have gotten rid of their reserve dollars. With Nixon's decree, starting in 1971, a dollar was backed by another dollar and by nothing more than faith and the fear of others. As economist Michael Hudson explained in 1972 (later forgotten for a quarter of a century), the United States began forcing its allies and other Third World countries to finance its own debt to prevent the dollar-tied markets from becoming unbalanced and causing painful crises in smaller countries. Treasury Secretary John Connaly, one month after Nixon's decree, summarized it as follows: *the U.S. government's deficit was (is) the rest of the world's problem*.[108]

Today, the dollar continues to drain value from former colonies, which define themselves as independent republics. For example, when in a peripheral country like Angola or Argentina the dollar loses too much value due to the orgy of printing (or keystrokes) in Washington and the "Cantillon effect," the central banks of those countries rush to buy more and more dollars. But why, God? Because if the dollar devalues too much, local entrepreneurs lose their ability to compete in the international market, and exports decline. This is especially true in extractive economies (like Africa and Latin America, where the local bourgeoisie and business

class do not need to import raw materials to export their manufactured goods; unlike the manufacturing strongholds of Asia, such as Taiwan or Singapore). Peripheral countries must produce something to buy dollars and thus pay their debts; they cannot print them like King Midas. So, the more demand there is from the central banks of the periphery, the more the dollar appreciates, and the more dollars Washington prints to suck more value from the countries that use it or from the workers who save it as their life savings.

The real asymmetry, once again, is concealed with a symmetrical (reciprocal, egalitarian) discourse. Through their financial arms like the IMF and the World Bank, Washington and Europe preach about the lack of "fiscal discipline" in the countries of the Global South, in debtor countries, in countries corrupted for centuries by Northern imperialism. Naturally, as has happened for centuries, the colonized adopt the ideology and morality of the colonizer and repeat the same discourse to self-flagellate or to keep the productive masses under control through guilt and due obedience.

Meanwhile, in the United States, politicians never tire of talking about "fiscal discipline," when it has never existed and matters only in the electoral market, where fear is the main *commodity*. Just as they do with taxes (unnecessary in the country of the global currency but convenient for maintaining some social control), forcing countries to have fiscal discipline is a way to keep them controlled and at the disposal of international investors. The other way is through their national debts.

The center preaches *fiscal discipline for its former colonies*, something that creditor countries do not have and never had. Is there a country more irresponsible in its finances than the United States? Can U.S. politicians accuse any other country of corruption and inefficiency of their politicians, as they do with countries with blocked and destroyed economies but without the ability to harass, plunder other countries, much less irresponsibly print a global currency? No, they cannot, but the media machinery is so powerful that everywhere we find decent citizens repeating these same myths about the *corruption of underdeveloped countries* as if they were obvious explanations for their economic and social problems.

However, it is very likely that this monetary orgy is coming to an end. Will it take twenty, forty years? Impossible to know. The persistence of high inflation in the West may not only be due to circumstantial events like the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine but also to the effect

of printing (and virtual creation) of dollars in a world that is slowly detaching itself from this global currency.

The global supremacy of the dollar is more important than any other resource, even the resource of the millionaire military power of the United States, highly ineffective and corrupt (both in its finances and its procedures abroad), since it depends on the dollar just as the dollar depends on the rest of the economic excesses in the country. Just as with the invasion of Iraq in 2003 or Libya in 2011, the goal of the coming years will be to prevent this supremacy from disappearing, which would leave the king naked with its massive deficits and international debts. Not even its extensive residential architecture based on wood and intense, permanent maintenance would withstand this change. To mention just one more effect.

It is for this very reason (apart from the Protestant cultural imperative to consider the rest of humanity—be they Indians, Blacks, Mexicans, Hindus, socialists, the poor, and all kinds of others—as enemies to be combated by invading them before eternal tribal fears come true) that the transfer of hegemony from the United States to China and other global centers will likely be violent, even more violent than the war in Ukraine.

After all, we must not forget that international conflict has not only been an Anglo-Saxon obsession in their endeavor to subjugate-others-who-might-subjugate-us-if-we-don't-subjugate-them-first, but it has also been an economic resource. In past centuries, it was a highly beneficial instrument for the coffers of the metropolises. But it always needed a master excuse, to convince the world and to convince itself that what they had to do was a moral obligation.

More recently, and to narrow this observation to just the dollar, we must recall the two main moments when this currency was under scrutiny and on the verge of losing its global dominance since the Bretton Woods Agreement of 1944. The first was, as we saw, the deconvertibility or abandonment of the gold standard in 1971, just as several European countries were questioning this supremacy by divesting themselves of their dollars and converting them into gold. The deconvertibility halted this process. Although it produced several problems, such as perhaps the inflationary crisis of the 70s, it had the almost magical effect of consolidating the U.S. currency as a safe reserve, even though it was based solely on faith in the power of the superpower. The second moment occurred with the creation of the euro in 1999. The creation of a currency with the

potential to compete with the dollar's supremacy was followed by September 11 and Washington's new large-scale wars. The overthrow of Saddam Hussein, a proponent of using the euro instead of dollars, and almost a decade later the fall of Muammar Gaddafi, who had proposed the creation of a common African currency, saved the dollar, if not from a fall, at least from a loss of geopolitical power. Now, in 2023, the BRICS countries are pushing for a third attempt to replace the dollar as the dictatorial currency. Given the rise of China and the notable internal decline of the United States, it is not hard to imagine an end to the dollar's hegemony. However, let us recall two factors that have already been proven in history: 1) currencies created to be shared by different economies with different cycles and economic needs do not function at the level of the dollar. The euro should be proof enough; but even a group united by reasonable geopolitical claims but economically and culturally distant like the BRICS; 2) Washington knows that the incitement of geopolitical, military conflicts not only means profits for its major corporations, of which it is a prisoner, but it also produces a known effect: investors and savers flock to the "safe currency," the dollar, for a mere psychological and cultural reason, something that does not change in a few years. The war in Ukraine, the tensions in Taiwan (initiated by Washington, not Beijing) are part of a known and very predictable pattern.

Taxes for them, bonds for us

THE STRATEGY OF HIJACKING THE EFFORT of others and accumulating its profits is not limited to inventions and new technologies but extends to almost every other aspect of social life, from (1) the economic (2) the political to (3) the narrative. "With our success and our wealth, we contribute to the prosperity of countries while the lazy ones below steal from us with taxes," etc. Narrative masks that, of course, are cultivated in the mass media and always germinate in a good portion of those below, a portion sufficient to win elections or maintain the status quo when some are lost.

From political manipulation to increase *profits* we stopped years ago when we analyzed *legal corruption*, especially in hegemonic powers like the United States, where corporations evade taxes in tax havens, pressure poor countries through global banks and their own volatile investments

("hot money"), and dictate the "correct policies" of deregulation, worker exploitation, and the destruction of national sovereignty through "free market" treaties—not to mention writing laws almost at will in the core, imperial countries, or whatever you want to call them.

Through political control of governments, parliaments, and even the judicial system, the One Percent guild controls capitalist and imperial institutions like the U.S. military, national and international banks such as the IMF, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization, establishing laws that are applied according to the economic and military power of each country. Governments like Washington's manage the global currency and its military force to continue and accelerate the transfer of wealth from the working classes to the One Percent Club.

Another example is the *tax-Treasury bond dynamic*. Over the past hundred years, popular organizations like labor unions have been demonized by the mainstream media (the case of William R. Hearst in the early 20th century, among others) to the point of demobilizing and nearly nullifying them. This process, which from the 1980s onward led to a growing gap between production and wages, and a widening divide between the One Percent Club and the rest of the population, was accelerated by the increase in the U.S. government's deficit.

The costs of wars have always gone into the coffers of the One Percent. That's what they're for. So have the sacrosanct "tax cuts to stimulate the economy." In 2017, for example, Donald Trump's government approved a tax cut for the ultra-wealthy worth trillions of dollars, while his voters and Democratic Party voters were distracted by a dispute over racism, patriotism, and the danger posed by poor immigrants from Central America. This tax cut to stimulate the economy, like many others, had no effect on the economy, but all subsequent studies confirmed the most obvious outcome: the only effect, aside from creating a chasm in the public deficit, was that those who least needed government assistance significantly increased their fortunes.

In other words, the more capital accumulated, the more political and media power the One Percent wields, and consequently, the more conflicts arise among the lower classes: poor whites against Blacks, Blacks against Indigenous people, Indigenous people against women, women against immigrants, legal immigrants against illegal immigrants, God against the Devil… Well, that's how it has always worked, in almost every country.

Now, how does a government close the gap between expenses and income? One solution is to print money. Countries in the Global South can't do this, as it produces hyperinflation almost immediately. Washington has a much larger margin, because the money it prints is distributed to every corner of the planet, and its inflationary effects are too. Of course, everything has a limit. So, to avoid printing hundreds of billions each year, the other option is to issue "Treasury securities," bonds, notes, and Treasury bills, depending on their maturity period. They are called *securities* because it is assumed that the U.S. Treasury Department will always have the capacity to pay—that is, the capacity to print whenever it is on the brink of default. Another reason to understand the dangers of dollarizing the economies of countries vampirized by the World Bank and the IMF, two more imperialist tools of Washington that demand and impose fiscal responsibility on neocolonies—a responsibility that Washington has never, ever practiced.

But this demand for fiscal discipline in other countries is due to three reasons: (1) to create conditions for more privatizations, whose beneficiaries will always be the big international investors; (2) keeping Global South countries in debt is a way to prolong neocolonialism by other means; and (3) Washington's massive deficit requires that other countries, like China and Germany, have surpluses. The surpluses of these countries are transferred to Wall Street and Washington through deposits and the purchase of U.S. bonds, which are paid for by printing money and increasing the deficit. Of course, too much of a good thing can turn bad at some point, which is why bankers and the Federal Reserve chairman need to play the art of wealth extraction through the global financial system with some care. (1) Excessive printing of dollars can lead to runaway inflation and a loss of faith in the global currency. (2) Excessive U.S. debt without equivalent surpluses in other countries can also have the same effect. (3) The contraction of consumption and non-speculative saving of dollars is non-money, as money only exists when it circulates in the form of spending or investments. A billion dollars in a vault is money for the person who owns it, but for capitalism, it is nothing—it is not money, it is dead.

Now, who buys Treasury bonds? The millionaires and the ultra-wealthy corporations. Not the workers. Does anyone know a coworker who has decided, of their own volition, to put their savings into U.S. Treasury bonds or those of their own country? It's not impossible, nor is it prohibited by any law, but in practice, it's a rarity. *Workers pay taxes*. That is,

when a salaried worker or the owner of a small business, whether it's a pizzeria or a tile factory, pays their taxes, they are handing over 100% of that money to the state. If they receive anything in return, it will be in a very indirect way, through a public service they do not own. In contrast, when a capitalist or their corporations buy Treasury notes or bonds, what they are doing is lending the state the money they haven't paid in taxes. Bonds come in various types; some mature in a year, others in fifteen or thirty years. In any case, the government's lender not only ensures that their capital is well protected but also that they will get 100% of it back plus interest. These bonds are actually State Debt, which, when it comes time to honor their commitments to investors, will be passed on to workers in the form of taxes or cuts to basic services like healthcare and education. All in the name of fiscal honesty and responsibility, "just like any decent household."

The business is a closed loop, and practices like these, legalized by the same national and global institutions, only increase the power of those at the top at the expense of the sweat of those at the bottom, while convincing them that if they are doing slightly better today than yesterday (in the best-case scenario), if they are texting from a state-of-the-art phone while their grandparents had to write letters by hand, it's all thanks to the virtues of capitalism and the fact that the Club of the One has been protected from the destructive and failed critics who always want the poor and the lazy to live off the state without working—punishing the success of the rich and preventing Republic X from becoming a developed country like those who know how to do things, who have "a different culture and mindset," like England or the United States.

POSTCAPITALISM: THE AGONY OF A CIVILIZATION

The theology of money

AS WE WILL BRIEFLY SEE LATER, the free market was always one of the main dogmas of liberals and capitalists, but it was never practiced by either liberals or capitalists. All the theories and metaphors, like "the invisible hand of the market," "the free way to organize an economy," and the multiple and useless graphs that some economists invented to believe that economics was a hard science like physics and not part of the social sciences, only worked in the simplified imagination of their authors and followers. Few dogmas are as simplistic as *the free market*, and that's where its strength lies: it was always something easy to consume.

Few things are as unreal and without any concrete historical example. In all cases, they are proposals stripped of almost all the most important variables of social and human reality. Let's not even talk about morality and justice, but about power. The law of *supply and demand*, the *freedom of markets*, *individual selfishness* as the engine of collective progress, do not include politics, imperial power, monetary and financial manipulations—much less externalities.

They don't even include the devastating effect of the application of their own theories. Even the Theory of Relativity and Quantum Physics consider that the observer is a participant in the modification of the observed phenomenon. Liberal and neoliberal economists do not. According to them, their theories describe how reality would function in a utopian, abstract world, as if it were a divine observation. In a society organized by the market, there is no accumulation of power and destruction of market freedom, even though founding liberals like Adam Smith, David Ricardo, or more recently Joseph Schumpeter recognized this weakness in the marvelous theory. In not a few cases, they called it corporations.

The prosperity and wealth accumulated by the world's greatest powers were made possible by imposing those rules on the colonies while making them impossible within and, especially, outside their borders. The global governance of private corporations is the continuation, expansion, and globalization of the slave system, not its antagonist. Even President Rutherford Hayes observed, a couple of decades after the abolition of slavery, that the U.S. government was at the service of corporations, not the people; that laws were passed to protect and benefit the former, not the latter.

Capitalism emerged in 17th-century England with the sanctification of the right to private property over any other right (including the right to life), and its empire arose through the forceful imposition of the interests of its private companies, like the East India Company, assisted by its government just as the monarchy had previously assisted feudal lords in stripping peasants of their lands under the new system of land commercialization and later of labor. This process was radicalized with the financial system. If at the beginning it served the capitalist economy, today it is the opposite: the capitalist economy (what remains of it) serves the financial system and those who control it. Of classical liberalism and capitalism, nothing remains. The current global system is as opposed to capitalism as capitalism was to its predecessor, feudalism, which is why we have called it for many years neofeudalism (for its economic reference) and neomedievalism (for its cultural reference).

Capitalism is dead. What we see is a lifeless zombie that frightens both apologists and detractors. As has happened throughout history, the response is a blind and fanatical denialism. What we are living through is the post-capitalist stage marked by increasingly frequent economic and social crises. The real dictatorship of financial cartels is exercised through virtual capital. It is the extreme radicalization of the abstraction initiated by capitalism in the 17th century regarding the exchange value of goods, services, and human lives. The capital extracted from workers and producers for investment in industry and commerce is no longer necessary. Now it is extracted directly through finance, the creation of money, and debt. The transfer of (productive) wealth from the middle classes and neocolonies occurs through (1) payment of others' debts in real money and payment of one's own debts in money created out of thin air; (2) transfer of resources from the working classes to finance eternal wars of the military industry, controlled by a financial elite; and (3) privatization of their spoils

and demands for compensation from destroyed nations, which, in turn, will cease to be competitors or potential allies of the competition.[liii]

If humanity survives the post-capitalist destruction, one day the warmongering fanaticism of Euro-American capitalism will be studied as a historical pathology far worse than the fanaticism of the Crusaders in the European Middle Ages.

This has been the Western history for centuries: extermination of the other, imposition of one's own fanaticism on the neighbor, something that was radicalized with the rise of European empires and especially the Anglo-Saxon world from the 16th century onward. The so-called "Hundred Years' Peace" (1815-1914) was, according to Karl Polanyi, "*an unprecedented phenomenon in the annals of Western civilization*." Of course, we must consider a detail often forgotten by these titles, such as that of the "Belle Époque": in that same hundred-year period, European and American imperialism exported almost all its violence to the colonies in Asia and Africa and to the banana republics in the Americas. In stark contrast, the nation-states of Asia, from China to India, remained for three centuries without military aggression or invasions, from 1598 to 1894, in both cases due to conflicts with Japan. If we consider China, the period without expansionist wars spans five hundred years from the brief invasion of Vietnam in 1406.

In Asia and Africa, there were cultures and civilizations based on pacifism and cooperation, as in the case of Ubuntu—including the much-maligned Islamic tradition in Spain and West Africa. It would suffice to consider the history of wars in Asia, Africa, and pre-European America, with all their bloody rituals and sacrifices, which never reached the frequency, intensity, and systematization of the barbarism of the good and peaceful Western civilization. The Kingdom of Nri in Africa, for example,

[liii] One of the most recent and controversial examples resulted in the war in Ukraine, which did not begin in 2022 with the Russian invasion but in 2014 with the coup d'état facilitated by the CIA and Western powers to destroy democracy in the name of democracy and continue not only the military expansion of NATO but also the wave of privatization (in this case, of the highly fertile Ukrainian lands, among other public goods or those distributed among small private owners) and the classic transfer of wealth from the working classes to corporations through the spending of the United States and Europe to finance "defense against Russian aggression." As always, for the states it is debt (which will have to be paid by the population of the United States, Ukraine, and Europe), while for the military-industrial complex and all satellite corporations it is pure profit—not to mention the pretension of demanding war reparations from Russia, just as the Treaty of Versailles demanded impossible reparations from Germany in 1919.

lasted a thousand years and was distinguished by its radical pacifism, its prohibition of slavery, its communal ownership of land and production, and its intense and free trade with other nations—all of which ended with the arrival of Christianity and the slave market of Portuguese sailors.

If finance was once a way to manage capital, now capital is a way to manage finance. Those who manage this game of value extraction by creating money out of thin air belong to a micro-elite. The power of governments is symbolic, virtual; they represent the great distraction in the struggle of opposites: for the people, they are either demons or saviors, but the real power lies with the banks and the corporations of the Pharaoh—a power that has never stopped growing in the last century. In 1790, the founder of the Rothschild banking dynasty, Mayer Rothschild, had already foreseen this: "*Let me issue and control the money of a nation, and I care not who makes its laws*."[109]

In this extreme process of abstraction, banks create money by pressing the "0" key on a keyboard multiple times. It is no coincidence that when Hindus and Arabs invented this digit, they represented it with a circle without angles to symbolize nothingness. Zero, nothingness, became the most important number for developing more complex accounting and, above all, for advancing mathematics and science.

This is how the entire system of pharaonic theft hangs by a single thread: faith. If, starting in 1971, the dollar replaced the gold standard with the faith of its holders, this faith still had a connection to material reality: it was assumed that the U.S. government would sustain its value through the real value of its economy. But the U.S. economy not only shifted from surplus to deficit but also from production to consumption. By the early 21st century, consumption represented 70 percent of its economy, which, by simple logic, was sustained by a growing deficit, the exports and surpluses of other countries, and the printing of dollar bills.[liv]

But a system based on faith needs temples, priests, and believers. Humanism and the Renaissance partially replaced churches with the press, reaching one of its peaks of public opinion manipulation with the "yellow press" at the end of the 19th century and the early 20th century with propaganda analyzed and developed by Edward Bernays and later by the Nazis in Europe.

[liv] In 2002, we published the article "The Theology of Money," where we analyzed this same problem in a more concise manner.

This process of capitalist evangelization has accelerated to reach its peak in our time. Like money, like capital, reality is a virtual creation. Only a global crisis could change this, and that crisis will be a crisis of faith, a religious conversion. This is why the times when it is maintained through constant and obsessive preaching become more important than any productive system or any gold reserve. These temples are the media. Like any religious temple, their main resource is the inoculation of fear of an entity that is venerated as the creator of prosperity and feared as the destroyer of the world order: the believer must not question the entity or the received order but maintain and consolidate it through repetition. Any doubt is demonized as a trick of the dark angels who want to destroy the world with their dangerous ideas.

We live in a transitional system where one system has ended and the new one has not yet begun. This is the world of the current financial dictatorship. In all cases, it is a new form of an old practice: the game of a minority living off the labor and effort of the majority, the accumulation and radicalization of the abstraction of capitalism in the financial world.

The current system of accumulation has long surpassed the very rules of capitalism. If real capital stolen from colonies or the working classes was once needed to invest and produce goods and services, today that capital is virtual. It is the greatest system of theft in history. Never before has humanity organized such a perfect system of global theft, which is no longer confined to empires but to a micro-elite within those former empires, most of whom may reside in developed countries or elsewhere. The system is so perfect that, when exposed to the light of day, people prefer to maintain it because they feel that a massive theft under a certain order is better than small thefts by common criminals that concretely affect a few individuals. This is how enslaved societies are created, defended by their own slaves.

The gods and their financial temples

IN 2011, THE CREDIT RATING AGENCY Standard & Poors, one of the three archangels, downgraded the U.S. debt rating from AAA to AA. This caused an increase in U.S. debt interest rates, which cost the

country over a billion dollars in interest payments. Interest payments are what truly matter, not the debts themselves, because without them, indebted governments default, and the impact is on the faith of the creditors and, in this case, the entire system.

But this divine miracle was more of a punishment to straighten the morals of the politicians in Washington who had reached this situation due to a mere squabble between Republicans and Democrats, and not because of the government's inability to print dollars or Treasury bonds by lifting the arbitrary "debt ceiling" invented in 1917 to create the superstition of fiscal responsibility.[lv]

In the face of a default, the government has the option to pay some of its expenses. For example, it can pay bondholders and stop paying pensions. In this case, the economic crisis induced by the financial dynamics would be less severe than if the government did the opposite, paying pensions and services to the most vulnerable first, leaving major investors waiting. In that case, the crisis would be total.

Printing money is not the same as creating it. Technically, it is the U.S. Treasury that is the only entity that prints dollars. But these, as is the case with other powers like Britain, represent only three percent of the circulating money. The rest is virtual money and is produced by central banks, like the Fed, and by major commercial banks. When the Fed sells bonds to banks, the banks are giving money to the government, but private banks can create money out of thin air. When an ordinary worker requests a loan to buy a house or start their own business, the bank simply writes the requested amount into its system, and that simple act becomes money as if by magic. When the borrower manages to pay off their debt in ten or thirty years, the bank removes that amount and keeps the interest paid. Debt interest is more real than the debts themselves and all the capital.

Currently, the circulating money in the world amounts to a quadrillion, that is, ten times the value of the world's GDP. Wall Street alone holds as much money as twice the GDP of the United States. Every time commercial banks and the Fed create money, the first to receive the benefits of this blessing are the big investors. This is the only place where the

[lv] The irony was that investors panicked and took refuge in the tradition of buying U.S. Treasury bonds.

Trickle-Down Theory works, although this capital created out of thin air usually evaporates before reaching the lower strata. Those at the bottom must work if they want to make a living. If not, who would produce anything in this world if not the slaves and the indebted? In the 17th century, the economist Richard Cantillon explained this phenomenon, which economists of the 21st century recognize and call the "Cantillon Effect." It is very simple: when money is created, those who truly benefit from it are the first to receive it. They are the first who can do business and buy goods and services before the creation of money causes inflation. Anyone can deduce corollaries such as: when the money reaches those at the bottom, prices will have already risen, and those managing the businesses at the top will also benefit from this. In short, the creation of money by the richest increases economic and social inequality. It couldn't be simpler.

Since its origins thousands of years ago, money has been the debt of some and the credit of others. Generally, until capitalism, it was created by governments. Since the 18th century, banks began issuing bonds, that is, they began selling debt, although governments reserved the right to regulate. What happens today is the same, with greater freedom. Banks create money by selling debt that will be paid by the borrower. Credit and debt are the same thing, except that banks lend money they don't have to an individual, and the individual must earn that money by working to repay it with interest.

The problem arises when banks create an amount of debt that borrowers cannot repay. It is when the bubble bursts and the entire system falls into a crisis of faith: shareholders and investors withdraw their capital in a process that, if not stopped by the government, becomes a domino effect. To place a barrier between two domino pieces, like firefighters burning a strip of forest to prevent the fire from spreading, the government bails out the banks, for example by buying private bonds or purchasing (nationalizing) the debts that in 2008 were called "toxic" because they were uncollectible. As always, "the damned government" came to the rescue of capitalism, which had sunk at the hands of capitalists. As always, it nationalized the losses and then privatized the profits.

If in its infancy capitalism separated politics from economics, use value from exchange value, senile capitalism first separated production from capital and then economics from finance.

The commercialization of existence

A STUDY PUBLISHED IN THE BRITISH Medical Association in 2006 revealed a consistent increase in psychological problems among English children and youth in the preceding decades.[110] All this despite the increase in national GDP, the relative stability of inflation, and the British economy at the time. I cite this academic reference only as an example, because such observations have become common since then. Even when neither inflation nor GDP are sources of national pride anymore. Many have observed a correlation between this problem and the increase in GDP, which is due to the growing pressure of the economic system to maintain competitiveness among individuals, from education to the workplace—probably today that stress has shifted to the awareness of the economic catastrophes ravaging the once-called First World, without having replaced the materialistic and success-driven obsession with something better.

Later, the obsession with economic success is crowned in a Kafkaesque manner with the well-known "Willy Loman syndrome," in reference to the character from Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949). Loman not only represents disillusionment, the late questioning of the "American dream," but also of capitalism itself. Precisely at the moment in life when we understand that age has already shown us that our ambitions will not be possible, and if they are, they no longer matter as much as when we were young. Or they were nothing but a sweet lie: the conviction of the salesman Loman (a metaphor for the capitalist homo) was always based on the idea that *success lies in being liked by people, in knowing how to sell oneself*.[lvi]

On the verge of retirement, Loman discovers, like an old prostitute abandoned to the world's forgetfulness and indifference, that no one cares about his problems. Unemployed and disillusioned with his own theories, Loman decides to commit suicide so that his children can collect the life insurance.

[lvi] In another way, the character in my novel *Silicona 5.0* (2017), a successful Argentine immigrant and businessman, experiences it through his desire to reach ten million dollars before turning fifty. The novel begins with the discovery that someone has stolen his identity and, in the search for the criminal on the other side of the border, Mexico, he discovers that it has been himself: "*they killed you over there, who knows when, and now you think you're chasing something when, in reality, you're running from your own corpse. You're a fugitive who thinks he's the detective*".

Currently, collecting life insurance for suicide is not so easy. Insurance companies have taken measures to prevent people from committing this reprehensible act, not because they care about anyone's life but because they worry that the benefits will go to people who actually need them. If other large companies like Walmart or ATT benefit from the death of their workers, then it enters the realm of business. This is explained by the current practice of companies purchasing life insurance for their employees. If the employee dies or commits suicide, they can easily be replaced by others, but the profits from collecting the insurance are considerable.[111]

The life insurance policies that large companies take out for their employees are called "*corporate life insurance*." This practice, initiated in the United States in the 1980s, was carried out without the employees' knowledge. When it became public, it didn't matter, because few understood it, and the rest, too busy surviving or being successful, didn't care. When in 2006 the IRS required companies to inform their employees about this insurance, the practice didn't change much. Usually, companies protect themselves from consumer risks by handing them a standard contract like *One Hundred Years of Solitude* which the overwhelmed signer almost never reads, and if they do, they fail to discover where the crucial clause is. Hence, this type of insurance was known as "dead peasant" insurance. Neither the employee nor their family is informed, and no one in the city offices cares. Except for whoever took their land or used it secretly to obtain some credit.

The company that contracts this type of insurance is the beneficiary of the policy, meaning that when the employee dies, the company collects the compensation for the loss of the asset, ranging from an executive (defined as a "key person") to an invisible employee (defined as a "divided dollar," since part of the compensation goes to the deceased's family) for the small private dictatorship. The sacred goal is to save the small dictatorship and, above all, the neofeudal system (the global dictatorship) defined by the sanctity of the private profits of each corporation.

This, which should be classified as a pathology, at least by the psychology that classifies any variation of human existence as a *syndrome*, is a

disease spread across continents and over the last few centuries. So much so that it is not considered as such but as *the desirable*.

What I have is what I'm worth

IN A JUNE 2023 INTERVIEW, the renowned host Piers Morgan asked British actress Elle Brooke if she wasn't ashamed of her work in the pornography industry, to which she replied that her father had died and her mother lived off what she earned. When he asked how she imagined her children might feel one day, the response was blunt and consistent: "*they can cry in a Ferrari*."[112] In other words, she didn't defend her personal freedom but rather the perspective of the dominant materialist morality.

Months earlier, at the end of 2022, a controversy went viral on Twitter between a former *kickboxer* and *influencer* named Andrew Tate and young environmentalist Greta Thunberg. Tate, a far-right activist known for his misogynistic statements, a millionaire and anti-environmentalist, sent the following message to the Swedish teenager: "*Hello @gretathunberg. I have 33 cars. My Bugatti has a w16 8.0L turbo. My two Ferrari 812 Competizione have 6.5L v12s. This is just the beginning. Send me your email so I can send you a complete list of my car collection and the enormous emissions each one produces*."[113] The environmentalist sent him a fake email address (smalldickenergy@getalife.com), referencing the size of Tate's penis, likely alluding to a well-known complex of men who boast about big things. Tate's followers responded with arguments like "*And you, Greta, what do you have?*"

The controversy (which ended in Tate's arrest and charges of human trafficking and exploitation when his whereabouts in Romania were revealed through a video he himself posted receiving a box of *Jerry's Pizza*) is a synthesis of our time. On one hand, the macho and patriarchal reaction to the achievements of civil movements, as a result of the frustration over the loss of privileges, which in turn led to the new conservative and neofascist reaction.[lvii] On the other hand, the denialist reaction to the climate

[lvii] Although his father was an African American chess master, Tate preferred punches, kicks to the head, and the friendship of neo-Nazi and white supremacist leaders.

catastrophe stemming from consumerism and its valuation of human existence by money and material possessions.

This culture, rooted in our time, is the culmination of the commercialization of life that began with Capitalism itself (in later chapters, we will see this effect and practice in the media). The same culture that reduces all human meaning to wealth is a hallmark of the new commercial artists, for example, rappers, famous not only for having their ideas tattooed on their skin but also for boasting in their songs and the rest of their lives about all the money they have and all the women who flock to them to get a piece of that legitimately earned money. Something, moreover, that also bears the mark of the CIA and the NSA when they invest their millions of dollars in culture. What better way to nullify critical art, problematic art, true art, by replacing it with submission to the god of money and obedience to a system that is logical for a micro-minority but absurd for the rest of society?

We have already outlined the process of how we arrived at this proud zombie life. Once the feudal system in Europe and any other system in its plundered and brutalized colonies was dismantled, *the market was identified with capitalism*, even though one existed for millennia and the other for only a few centuries. Capitalism did not invent the market or its rules; it merely turned its natural tendency toward economic profits into the center of human life and the accumulation of wealth, whether through trade or massive imperialist plunder, into its functional and ideological goal. Moreover, it turned individuals into producers and consumers, and human existence into a product. It objectified the inhabitants of the colonies, first as slaves based on race and later as slaves based on wages and social class.

Now, though overrepresented, the inferior beings are no longer necessarily Black or mixed-race like Mr. Tate, but rather the poor or idealists without property and without significant capital, like Mrs. Thunberg. That is, the rich vs. the poor, the successful vs. the failures, the hardworking vs. the lazy. A perfect class struggle that does not even want to hear about class struggle. As historian Ellen Meiksins Wood observed, the capitalist market is not a market of opportunities but of imposition. The capitalist revolution does not lie in the market but in the institutions (political, legal, cultural, and ideological) that made it the center of human existence.[114]

Capitalism was born in the new forms of property in the English countryside. By then, the ancient market had already begun a pre-capitalist process with the growth of cities in Italy and the Netherlands, but it became what historians call a "failed process." It was in rural England where the market freed itself from other social constraints and became an imposition and an open dispossession not only of land but also of the psychological stability of the new tenant farmers. A Belgian veterinarian had observed that "*the English value their land only to profit from it*."[115] On December 26, 1822, the Mexican ambassador in Washington, José Manuel Bermúdez Zozaya, informed the chancellor José Manuel de Herrera: "*The arrogance of these republicans does not allow them to see us as equals but as inferiors…; they deeply love our money, not us, nor are they capable of entering into an alliance or trade agreement, except for their own convenience, disregarding reciprocity…*"[116] Eleven years later, the On June 10, a member of Parliament, Rigby Watson, had explained the logic of abolishing slavery and promoting consumerism among Black people: "*To make them work and develop a taste for luxuries and comforts, they must first be taught, little by little, to desire those objects that can be attained through labor. There is a progression from the possession of necessities to the desire for luxuries; once these luxuries are attained, they will become necessities across all social classes. This is the kind of progress through which Black people must pass*, and this is the kind of education to which they must be subjected."117 To cite just a few examples.

When human life was commercialized. After the great exception of the European Middle Ages, which lasted a millennium, there came a moment when the life of cities (burgs) became separated from food production. Then, the market began to impose its rules on the rest of human existence (let's set aside the ecosystem and the rest of life on the planet). What Marx called the "*commodity fetishism*." Then, the worker's labor became independent (or "alienated," in Marx's terms) from the final consumer product. In the 20th century, there was another moment when capital began to detach itself from the means of production and consumption. That is, it was a progressive and sustained process of *abstraction*, as noted by Ernesto Sábato seventy years ago in *Men and Gears* (1951), recalling the Russian thinker Nikolai Berdyaev: the Renaissance "*was a humanist movement that ended in dehumanization*."[118]

ALL THIS FROM A MATERIALIST, structural, and economic perspective. But, as we will see in the chapter on Semantic Fields, and as we will explore in more detail in the following chapters, there is a semantic-psychological dynamic that, while it may stem from initial material needs, also conditions or sustains this reality even as the forms of production and consumption have changed. Religious narratives are a clear example. Protestantism altered Christian theology to adapt to and propel the emerging capitalism. But, just as racism and the various crimes and massacres of innocents mentioned in the Bible (as reasons of God "we cannot understand") are accepted thousands of years later despite the material and ethical changes that come with history, so too do narratives persist despite social and ideological evolutions: the glaring contradictions do not destroy the dominant narratives, since propaganda (social, political, media) does not need to adhere to the rational principle of non-contradiction but rather to the emotional principle of desire.

For example, one of the arbitrary associations of capitalist ideology is to identify it with democracy, when in reality its stronghold is economic liberalism and the accumulation of power at the apex of the social pyramid. History is full of dictatorships supported and funded by liberal capitalists, from the far-right dictatorships in Latin America to the communist dictatorship in China. One of the many founding contradictions of Protestant Christianity is to identify the teachings of Jesus with the preaching of capitalists; the Jesus who drove the merchants out of the temple with the merchants of the temple; or the Jesus who warned of how difficult it is for a rich man to enter paradise with the allegory of the camel and the needle, with the conviction of Protestant pastors that the richer they are, the more God loves them and hates (condemns) the poor. Or the miracle of Jesus when he distributed free food to the people and healed the sick without charging them. Or his recommendation not to worry about tomorrow because God will provide, that same God who promises a paradise where all are equal, where there is no money or social classes and everything is governed by a supreme authority, a utopia that resembles the paradise of communists more than that of capitalists.

On June 7, 1844, the U.S. Congress rejects the annexation of Texas by 16 votes in favor and 36 against. Sanity has prevailed, it is said in the

halls. The press claims that the Whig party candidate, Henry Clay, more ambiguous on the issue of Texas and slavery, only has to walk to the White House.

But James Polk senses a strategy that will turn all the debates about Texas and slavery that dominate politics that year. Instead of continuing to discuss annexation, he begins to talk about the re-annexation of Texas. Polk is not a religious man, but his wife Sarah has forced him to present himself as devout. More important than that: Polk is part of a culture of faith where what one believes is more important than evidence, and if what one believes contradicts the clearest evidence, the more merit there is in the believer. Can a river not be split in two? Well, it only splits for those who close their eyes and believe it can be split by the force of belief. Religious language has no commitment to observable facts, and in politics, it also holds more weight than facts, which is why the most important battle is the dialectical battle. Words create the past and force the future. Words create reality as God created the world from the word. Despite his disinterest in God, apart from his own ambitions and his lack of preparation, these are all the intellectual tools from which President Polk and his subjects view reality.

The idea of starting to talk about *re*-annexation of Texas, as always, is not his, but that of Mississippi Senator Robert J. Walker. According to the senator, Texas was already included in the Louisiana Purchase. Louisiana had been purchased from the French Empire because the giant territory populated by millions of Indians was not worth a penny compared to the small colony of Haiti. As always, the indigenous nations were not invited to the Louisiana negotiations, but neither was the Spanish Empire, so it is unlikely that Texas was included in the sale contract with the French. In fact, after the deal was closed with Napoleon Bonaparte in 1804, the boundaries of these territories had been defined and agreed upon with extreme clarity by the Adams-Onís Treaty, signed by President John Quincy Adams and the representative of the Spanish Empire in 1819. This treaty defined the Sabine River, the future boundary between the states of Louisiana and Texas, as the limit of the territories acquired from France.

The linguistic strategy of the Southern racists to annex Texas and add another slave state to the Union did not fail. Polk was elected by a margin of nearly one percent among eligible voters (as always, important elections in a liberal democracy are decided by a coin toss). Enough to change the history of the United States and the entire world. Despite the

resistance of some politicians and the American generals sent to provoke Mexico on its own territory, Polk would achieve what the powerful and overrepresented Southern politicians so desperately desired: a war with a Mexico devastated by an earthquake and without the military resources to resist the theft of half its territory and the expansion of slavery in the name of freedom and democracy. The new rotary press and the new penny newspaper would spread the idea and cause of patriotic slavery. Complicated intellectuals like David Thoreau, who refused to pay taxes in protest against this war and against slavery, which they considered immoral, would not be heard.

A century later, after winning the Second World War and dissolving the life-saving alliance with Stalin, with the other two empires, Japan and Europe, reduced to rubble, the United States sat on the absolute throne of the greatest superpower. As always, it had to design strategies to maintain or increase that power based on new legitimizing myths. In the 1947 speech for Truman's second presidency, a new linguistic element appeared, one that would accompany its partner, the fight against communism. Before an audience of ten million, Truman announced a plan of aid "for the *development*" of nations less favored by the intelligence and moral rectitude of the victor. From then on, the plundered empires would be referred to as "developed nations," and the colonies, in colonies and dependent or harassed republics, would be called "underdeveloped countries," the lazy Third World that, as during the invasions of the Banana Republics in the early 20th century, could not develop, no longer so much because they belonged to inferior races but because they possessed a sick culture. "The White Man's Burden (*The White Man's Burden*)" summarized and popularized by the British Rudyard Kipling in 1899, was translated into "we will help the poor and exploited colonies to achieve some of what we have achieved so they remain calm." The exploited became the "lazy ones who received money from the powers built on their own labor."

But propaganda exists not to inform but to lie, that is, to convince someone to do something they otherwise would not do. It is a mask, just as dominant narratives mask the dominant reality, such as the flag of the "free market" capitalism that was never free but quite the opposite. Not only because the industrialized empires were never known for their freedom but because they developed based on state interventions in their own commercial and industrial development, with subsidies, tariffs, and other protectionist resources that were condemned in the colonies and in

dependent capitalist countries. The same happened with the discourse of "aid for *development*" initiated by Truman and sold by successive governments in Washington: every time a country tried to develop, its democratic and incipiently independent governments suffered brutal coups, almost all organized by the CIA (created by Truman himself), from Iran in 1953 and Guatemala in 1954, Indonesia in 1965, to Bolivia in 2019, passing through Brazil in 1964, Ghana in 1966, Indonesia in 1967, Chile in 1973, and so many others.

Benefits, *accumulation* and *private property* on one hand and *democracy* and *equal-liberty* on the other are the main contradiction of capitalism that its narrative has successfully amalgamated to the point that a sufficient majority identifies *capitalism*, *democracy* and *Christianity* almost as the Three Marys.

As at the beginning: none of these contradictions matter as much as the faith of the believer and the insistence of fragmented propaganda—if propaganda were not fragmented, not only would it be difficult to consume, but the majority could not digest a logical and continuous thread for more than sixty seconds, a tweet, or a meme.

In a semantic and decisive sense of the global order in the last century, there is a powerful parallel between (1) *the dollar* and (2) *the media narrative* of the dominant American ideology. When in 1971 Nixon decreed the end of the dollar's convertibility to its gold backing, the dollar became a fiat currency (by decree), meaning it was based solely on the issuer's decision and the faith of the recipient. Faith and fear, as demanded by the god of the Old Testament, as supreme values. To avoid losing their own savings and to continue exporting, productive countries, former colonies, and even former European empires had to confirm and reinforce their faith and fear in the dollar to maintain it as the hegemonic currency. Thus, Washington dedicated itself to printing tons of paper money and continued to harass other countries, from then on not for their trade surplus but for their deficit (we will explain this later).

Just as Washington can irresponsibly print dollars to flood the planet with a symbol based on faith and trembling, so too does it proceed with a narrative that likely stems from its religious roots: *prayer*. Reality does not matter; the truth of a statement does not depend on any material fact but on its own discourse. Noah's Ark did not exist because someone might believe (much less prove) that Noah packed millions of animal species with their respective pairs into a wooden ship and fed them for 150

days, but because the sacred texts say so. If someone doubts, what they must do is repeat it many times and visit their church every Sunday to eliminate any doubt. The same goes for the narratives about the expansion of democracy and freedom, while the slave system expanded in the 19th century and the bloodiest military dictatorships in the 20th century. After all, the dollar is a narrative, and Washington only needs to print it. Similarly, the narratives about Democracy, Freedom, and Human Rights are dollars, and both politicians and dominant media can repeat (print) them as many times as they want, whether to justify a war like Vietnam, Iraq, or the systematic torture in Guantánamo.

Although the dynamics of resistance culture and the propaganda of power are fundamental in defining policies that decide between moderate capitalism or radical capitalism, the *supercycles* are defined by unstoppable material changes in the forms of production and consumption, that is, survival. A supercycle determined the replacement of the feudal system and the Middle Ages with a market economy and society, capitalism. It is very likely that the radical technologies developing during this 21st century, such as robotics and Artificial Intelligence, will produce a new supercycle that replaces capitalism with a new Era, where, for example, individuals are no longer tied to work or the laws of the market due to resources like Universal Basic Income and a new form of organized anarchy against an absolutist system of financial capital and governments that serve it.

The same ideas, the same opposite results

THE SAME PROCESS OF PRIVATIZATION of communal lands in 16th and 17th century England through the enclosure, first illegal and then legal, of communal lands, occurred in the Americas immediately afterward with the lands of indigenous peoples. The great difference was that, until well into the 20th century, the dispossessed peasants living on others' lands (gauchos in the Southern Cone, pongo Indians in the Andean countries, quilombero blacks and *patarrajada* Indians in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean) did not become tenants nor did they provoke any industrial or post-industrial revolution. Like the English peasants, they migrated to the cities in the 20th century when there were industrial

development plans, as in Getulio Vargas' Brazil and Juan Perón's Argentina.

This process of late industrialization (known as ISI or "Import Substitution Industrialization") had very limited success. The Argentine economist Raúl Prebisch was the one who articulated the understanding of this historical moment, observing a progressive decrease in the price of raw materials exported by poor countries and an increase in the price of industrialized products in rich countries. To respond to this sustained trend of recent history, he proposed the industrialization of poor or independent societies to replace their dependence on imports from rich countries. The problem, in addition to the historical *timing*, was that Latin American countries had no colonies in Africa or Asia—nor in Europe. Therefore, the idea of "import substitution" at the national level could not be replaced by "import imposition" in some other part of the world.

In the 1960s, some theorists like Andre Gunder Frank articulated their observations in the "Dependency Theory" of satellite capitalist countries, which was later taken up by Eduardo Galeano in *Open Veins of Latin America* (1971) and largely discredited by mainstream propaganda, but it remains more than alive in academia, from American universities to European and Latin American ones. In the reactionary governments of Argentina and Brazil in the 1950s and 1960s, the idea and the process led to the phenomenon of favelas, suburban shantytowns, and slums.

The political and media power made sure to overlook an important part of the logic of this moment: the industrialized North aborted this development plan in the name of their "aid for *development*," promoting coups and military dictatorships in every independent country in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The industrialization of the former colonies not only could result in some competition, however weak, but, above all, it meant an increase in the cost of raw materials due to higher demand and the rising cost of labor, traditionally cheap in systems of semi-slavery or wage slavery. In the second half of the Cold War, traditional friendly dictatorships began to be replaced by strategically indebted democracies trapped in inflation. In any case, the coups, dictatorships, and external debts of the South were planned in the North.

In summary, the idea of industrial development, with varying results from Argentina to China, was not a bad idea, but, in historical terms, it was applied too late. To make matters worse, it was applied in countries with a system of "dependent capitalism" (that is, the First World

capitalism model but without the coercive power of the First World) and against the brutal resistance of the traditional rural and mining oligarchy, supported by the subservient armies, both serving foreign corporations. Of course, always in the name of patriotism and against foreign intervention. In Latin America, this late industrialization occurred just a few decades before the post-industrial era in Europe and the United States, which began in the 1970s. As if that weren't enough, the successive dictatorships in Africa and Latin America during the 1960s and 1970s, organized and supported by London, Washington, and the CIA, returned those societies to a feudalism more functional for the capitals of the North.

Why the difference between one process and the other? Because of the same CAN logic (coercion-accumulation-narration). Once industry was developed in England first and then in the United States, Latin American neo-feudalism did not serve the development of its own industrialization but rather the expansion of foreign industrialization, that of the Northwestern empires. This, which was an economic process, was controlled and managed by the physical coercive forces of the established empires. The "laws of the market" were unleashed to the convenience of the concentrated power of the North (first protectionist and then champion of the "free market" ideology) to the rest of the non-industrialized world. What in one historical moment is medicine, in another is poison. What served to develop the Anglo-Saxon North, served to keep the rest of the world in a state of servitude. Economic, legal, geopolitical, ideological, media, ethical, and aesthetic servitude.

In 1885, Senator Henry Dawes of Massachusetts, recognized as an expert on indigenous issues, reported to Congress that among the Cherokees, "*there was not a family in the whole nation that did not have its own home. There were no poor, nor did the nation owe a dollar to anyone. The Cherokees built their own capital, schools, and hospitals. However, the defect of the system is evident. They have gone as far as they can, because they own their communal lands... Among them, there is no selfishness, which is the basis of civilization. Until this people decide to accept that their lands must be divided among their citizens so that each one can own the land they cultivate, they will not make much progress...*" Naturally, the opinion of the administrators of others' success prevailed, and the Cherokee lands were divided and generously offered to their inhabitants as private property with catastrophic results. In 1877, Congress passed the "Desert Land Act" to develop the area,

radicalizing dispossession and social differences through the privatization of land and water.

The same happened further north and further south. In the defeated and plundered Mexico of the 1850s, Miguel Lerdo de Tejada managed to pass a land privatization law, initially reasonable, considering the accumulation of unproductive lands in the hands of the Catholic Church. This law and this policy were continued and radicalized by the liberal dictator Porfirio Díaz from the 1870s. As was a Latin American tradition until the end of the following century, as the economy grew, so did poverty. Díaz was another of the favorite dictators of North American megacorporations and the "peaceful invasion," for obvious reasons. All in the name of "freedom." Mexican peasants (as in other parts of the continent), for centuries adapted to their own *way of life* that they did not impose on the West, based on community production and consumption, soon began to impoverish and sell their lands. By the time the Mexican Revolution broke out in 1910, eight out of ten peasants were landless.

What's new? The dominant system is no longer in its infancy, as it was in the farms of 16th-century England and its industries later. Back then, the future imperial island was an open field for expansion, and when it closed, the entire planet remained to expand the model. Well, that's what's new. Now we find ourselves in a closed world, with no room for the expansion of the new system, the capitalist system. Worse than that, we are facing its worst and most dangerous consequences, such as the climate catastrophe and extreme social inequalities.

Freedom, democracy, and property

CAPITALISM DID NOT EMERGE in Anglo-Saxon America, but its forms, conceptions, and contemporary paradigms are rooted in a system that, at first glance, could be considered something different and even opposite: the slave system. Especially that system matured in the states of the American South. In turn, the new Anglo-Saxon slavery was built not only on racial paranoia but also on its fanatical conception of private property and the desacralization of the material world (such as nature and other peoples), a source of economic benefits for the individual, for the ego that participates

in a collective enterprise only as a shareholder and holds selfishness as the foundational dogma of progress, prosperity, and happiness.

Every historical system needs ideological tools to sustain it beyond its material forces. These are usually provided at a certain moment in history. Just as feudalism against absolute monarchies continued into liberalism, American slavery continued into corporations and the anti-government tradition of the Confederate South, in the demonization of wage workers, substitutes for black slaves—and wage-earning defenders of capitalism continued the tradition of black slaves defending slavery, under the same instruments of ideological narrative from the dominant media of the time, whether the church or more modern chains of press and audiovisual media.

At other times, we have paused to consider the multiple continuities of the American slave system with the corporate capitalist system that followed, not by chance, the Civil War, which ended (as an armed conflict) in 1865. The big businessmen, the lobbies of today, are the slaveholders of yesterday. The wage workers of today are the dangerous slaves of yesterday. Ideas like the Trickle-Down Theory already existed during slavery. In fact, though never named as such, it is the only economic theory of the slave system: the richer the masters, the better the rations their slaves received. Generally, and with exceptions, it was not the same to be the slave of a poor white man as it was to be the slave of a prosperous slave trader. The defeated American South triumphed over the supposed ideals of the liberal North to the point that an antagonist of monarchies and slavery, liberalism, was colonized by this mentality until it matured into neoliberalism and joined forces with all fascist, Nazi, and far-right ideologies in the 20th and 21st centuries. Only the Latin American dictatorships are an example of this extreme experiment articulated by economists like Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek: "*I prefer a liberal dictatorship to a democracy that does not respect liberalism*."[119] When neoliberal recipes (summarized in the Washington Consensus) were imposed on countries harassed by their debts by the "friendly dictatorships" of private corporations, in each and every case, they ended in the dismantling of the social fabric and in historic economic crises. To give just one example, let us recall the case of water privatization in Bolivia. The promise that "private companies do it better" because they are driven by the ambition of profit success overlooks the most obvious fact: they are driven by the success of their profits. That is, in addition to reducing operational costs (salaries, social benefits),

the company's profits must be maximized to be successful. Otherwise, they resort to extortion. In the 1990s, the World Bank pressured the Bolivian government to privatize water in Cochabamba. The government agreed and granted the water to Bechtel, an American corporation. As is well known, the story did not end with lower prices and improved service but rather the opposite, leading to protests and social instability in 2000. The same story of water privatization repeated itself from Africa to India. Of course, the World Bank acknowledged no error. Years later, the same bank insisted on denying the privatization disaster. Lars Thunell, vice president and CEO of the International Finance Corporation (a member of the World Bank Group), in 2008 explained the real reason: "*We believe that providing drinking water and sanitation services is a real opportunity to do good business*."[120]

As said before: *Profits*, *accumulation* and *private property* on one hand and *democracy* and *equal-freedom* on the other are the founding contradiction of capitalism that its narrative has managed to mask with its opposite, which is why, for generations, *capitalism*, *democracy* and *Christianity* have been almost like the Three Marys. This fundamental contradiction has a rigid historical consistency: Greece, the inventor of democracy, not only had slaves but, based on its economic power and despite its internal tolerance and diversity, was an arbitrary empire like any other. The origin of the United States claims, in popular, media, and even literary narratives, the title of the first democracy in the Americas and the modern world. Beyond the speeches, a meticulous Declaration of Independence, and a reasonable constitution, in reality, it was a slave system and, from the beginning, with an imperialist fanaticism that ravaged indigenous, Mexican, and tropical territories, all based on its messianic conception of being a chosen people and constituted by a superior race that should not mix with the rest of the blacks and undesirable hybrids who could only be invaded to extract their resources in the name of civilization.

The English pirates were not much different. In fact, *pirates were very democratic*. Their captains and internal organization depended on the vote of the rest of the crew, and they could be elected or removed depending on their effectiveness in robbing other ships. In the 20th and 21st centuries, the excuse of "democracy" by the Anglo-Saxon empires will be used multiple times to pirate the resources of other peoples, whether governed by "enemy dictators" or by "democracies" that did not fully understand what that meant.

The commercialization of existence (everything is bought and sold, even the human lives of those at the bottom), the privatization of the economy (the masters have feudal rights), federalist politics in favor of state independence and hatred of federal governments (the fiefs and their lords do not accept orders, except from God), the love of weapons and private militias (the militias mentioned in the Second Amendment were the slave police and needed to carry weapons to keep the majority at the bottom under control in the name of freedom), all matured in the slave system and were imposed on their enemies in the industrial North, until they became the national culture and imperial politics of the new empire.

It is not a minor detail and should not be forgotten that, after all, the First Amendment, which guarantees "freedom of speech," as well as the rest of the U.S. Constitution, was conceived and written by wealthy slaveholders. The fundamental rights were established to confirm their independence from the empire of the time and, at the same time, protect the rights of their social class—rich, white, patriarchal, and deeply racist—which is why current discussions about "the true spirit" of the Founding Fathers in this or that law or amendment are at least paradoxical as a dogmatic criterion for judicial interpretation. Why are all theoretical energies invested in interpreting something written by those slave-owning gentlemen over two centuries ago, and almost nothing in the possibility of abolishing or amending those famous amendments? Why should hundreds of millions of people today be bound by the criteria of a handful of men who couldn't even imagine a car or a rocket? The answer lies in the Anglo-Saxon fanaticism of believing that, like wine, moral truth becomes truer and more moral the older it is. This prejudice stems from the ecclesiastical training of seeking the truth of a text in the original intentions of God, which is absolutely impossible. Besides, Jefferson was not Jesus, and even he acknowledged that new generations should write their own laws.

This foundational origin, a hallmark of almost all pre-national thought, explains expressions like the one made in August 2011 by the Republican presidential candidate, businessman Mitt Romney: "*Corporations are people, my friend*" ("Corporations are people too"). Since the 1970s, as a reaction to the national and international critiques of the 1960s, the neoconservative reaction had managed to establish the idea that the First Amendment, freedom of speech, should also extend to businesses. Something like, "money has the right to speak." After all, the still-current electoral system is a legacy of the slave system that does not accept the

democratic principle of "one person, one vote." In 2010 (and with the precedent of the Buckley vs. Valeo ruling of 1976), the Supreme Court, composed mostly of judges nominated by Republican presidents, ruled that all limits on donations from large corporations to political parties should be lifted, because these were covered under "freedom of speech." Once again, the mercantilist, utilitarian spirit of slavery, where property—including the property of other human beings—is at the heart of the laws that claimed to protect freedom and democracy.

It is no coincidence that these same ideologues of "freedom of enterprise" and "freedom of speech" are the first to restrict the freedom of expression of others as soon as they gain political power. In 2021 and 2022, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis passed several laws prohibiting the review of the racist and slave-owning history of this country in high schools and even the mere mention of the existence of gays and lesbians. He attempted to do the same with universities, allowing students to sue professors who, exercising academic freedom, express critical theories about American constitutional racism. "*We will not allow Florida's tax dollars to be spent on teaching children to hate our country*," declared the governor, making clear the value of money over any inconvenient truth.[121] Seeking and speaking the truth openly is not an act of love but of hate. Only patriotic flattery is allowed. In August 2022, Judge Mark Walker temporarily blocked this law, arguing that "*it officially prohibits professors from expressing unfavorable views in university classrooms and allows the unrestricted expression of opposing views. The defendants argue that, under this law, professors enjoy 'academic freedom' as long as they express only those views that the State approves. This is positively dystopian*." A month later, Governor DeSantis swept the elections. He was re-elected as governor and positioned himself as one of the strongest candidates of the Republican Party for the 2024 presidential race.

Due to three fundamental factors (the *private propaganda*, present in the media and popular culture; the powerful *secret institutions* with the power to decide who lives and who dies; and the unlimited power of *corporations*) it is impossible to equate this type of *liberal democracy* with *democracy*, plain and simple. Liberal democracies, hijacked by the ideology of capital, the dictates of corporations, and the secret decisions of powerful agencies, have reduced the people's right to govern themselves according to their own interests to the right to vote. One thing is for a people to have achieved the right to universal suffrage, and another is for them to have control over the economy.

According to historian Ellen Meiksins Wood, the United States is not a democracy but a liberal system. Paradoxically, liberalism was developed in Europe by feudal lords during the Middle Ages to protect their rights against monarchical interference and later evolved into a narrative, ideology, and legal system favoring private property as a supreme right separate from state power.[122] A form of liberal democracy may include liberalism as an ideology, but, as we have insisted before regarding capitalism, it easily aligns with any type of dictatorship. A long list of historical evidence was provided by military dictatorships in Latin America. As British economist Friedrich Hayek, a friend of Milton Friedman and accomplice in the sermon that blessed Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile, summarized in 1981, "*I prefer a liberal dictatorship to a democracy that does not respect liberalism*."[123]

Something similar would occur in the United States with the dogma of state independence from the federal government. From 1825 to 1836, Anglo immigrants requested the Mexican government to make a legal exception for Texas, allowing them to maintain their right to own slaves as livestock. When the centralists (months later the Centralist Republic) replaced the federalists in Mexico City, all their hopes died, and they resolved it with a rebellion from above: the independence of Texas in 1836. The same happened when Texas and other southern states, under the banner of the Confederacy, went to the Civil War in 1860 against the United States to maintain their right to slavery and lost five years later. They became champions of state freedom to dictate their own laws, among which were the Jim Crow laws that established discrimination against the new Black citizens.

As we have insisted before, the idea that the United States never had a dictatorship is only sustained by national myths, in the same way that slavery expanded into the Wild West in the name of God, civilization, humanism, and freedom. In fact, it was a perfect ethnic dictatorship, composed of millionaires and slaveholders. After the country's refounding following the Civil War that ended in 1865, at least in the constitution and the law, the existence of Black people as human beings and citizens was recognized. The Reconstruction Era was more of a reconstruction of the ideology of the defeated slaveholding Confederacy. Some local elections won by Black people were overturned through coups, outraged and violent white mobs, and the new Jim Crow laws that imposed racial discrimination and obstacles to Black voting, including a fee for each participation

in elections. Voter turnout was traditionally low. Even in the 1912 elections, 59 percent of eligible voters participated, but the figure represented less than 20 percent of the population, largely due to the largest wave of immigration in the country's history, the demobilization of Black people, and the apathy of the rest of society. The same would continue to occur, though not as radically, well into the 21st century. As early as 1989, Robert Entman had titled this phenomenon in his book "*Democracy without Citizens*."

By 1998, barely a third of eligible voters participated in the presidential election. In recent years, turnout has increased due to the strong militancy of far-right groups, emerging, as in Europe, from a strong feeling (though not consciousness) of a progressive loss of power in deciding "regime changes" and policies in foreign countries. All of this coincides with a reduction in purchasing power and living standards ("*our way of life*") of the middle class. The obscene increase in the gap between the top one percent of the population and the rest is practically undebated. According to the flagship publication of business and the capitalist world, *Forbes*, in 2020 the top one percent of U.S. households already owned fifteen times more wealth than the combined wealth of the bottom half.[124] Nothing to be surprised about. In the 1970s, the new neoliberal policies of the North began to be imposed on countries in the Global South through the force of arms and repression. One of the main laboratories (more ideological than economic) was Augusto Pinochet's Chile. Pinochet's Chile was not blocked until "its economy screamed in pain," as Nixon said and did with Allende's Chile, but quite the opposite: like other friendly dictatorships, this Chile received tsunamis of dollars. In the same way, the North could provide itself with almost unlimited liquidity by printing paper money. Today, adding zeros to the economy doesn't even require that printing effort. When this ideology was imported into the United States starting in the 1980s (the Trickle-Down Doctrine of neoliberalism is nothing more than old capitalism taken to the extreme), the graphs of productivity growth and workers' wage increases began to diverge. The gap has not stopped growing since.[125] In fact, wage increases remained stagnant. The difference between increased production and the return of profits to wages was, obviously, hoarded by the Managers of business and the economy. It's not called systematic theft because it offends some sensibilities. Those who dare to mention it are labeled socialists, which in the United States equates to communist or Stalinist, an intellectual fossilization that

prevents any serious questioning of a decaying reality that has only worsened since the Reaganite 1980s.

Electoral options have narrowed even further. Without fear of exaggeration, we can say that the 1896 or 1900 elections, in which Republican President McKinley faced off against the anti-imperialist Democrat William Bryan, offered greater ideological diversity and different concrete proposals than any other election in recent generations.

Every time an election approaches in the United States, whether presidential or midterm, voters receive a long list of candidates in the mail: for president, for senators, for representatives, for state judges, or district commissioners. The overwhelming majority of voters only know the top two or three (presidents or senators) due to the bombardment of traditional media, almost always accusing the opponent of being lazy or a friend of communists, Muslims, or illegal immigrants (not coincidentally, minorities or large groups who cannot vote). They usually mark the oval next to the name that belongs to their favorite party, Democrat or Republican, which are the only two parties with a chance of alternating in political power. Occasionally, some names of independent candidates appear (from the Green Party or in favor of mixed nuts). Almost no one manages to identify the dozen names that follow further down. On one hand, the system gives the strong impression of a functioning democracy. From the comfort of their couch, the voter feels they have the power to choose and change something. Once the selection of candidates is done, they get up, mail their vote, and return to their couch to (if there isn't some last-minute tragedy to be outraged about) continue watching *pranks* and entertainment shows. From what I've been able to gather over many years, very few (probably no one) knows all those names below the senators. In my case, I always take the time to look up each of those names online. When I finish reading a dozen biographies and "contributions to society," I end up leaving most of the observations blank. The independent candidates are often even worse than the well-known senators and presidential candidates. This contradicts the long list of individuals and groups who every day propose a real alternative to the status quo.

Once in a class, students asked me if I had already voted and what I thought of the electoral system. Recalling the experiences summarized above, I answered: "*The system works perfectly. As a voter, I feel the same way when I go to McDonald's. In the waiting line, one must look at a long menu of imaginative variations on the same thing and choose one. Of course, as a*

consumer, one can leave McDonald's and try another restaurant. But as a citizen, not as a consumer, one cannot leave one country to vote in another. In my case, I could go vote in Uruguay, but since I'm not a capitalist but a wage earner, I depend on my job, and my job, the survival of my family, depends on the offer and the opportunity of a given moment."

The idea of freedom is as old as humanity itself, but the idea of democracy is more recent. Even more recent, with just a few centuries, is the idea of equality. Unlike the Athenian democracy of over two thousand years ago and the American democracy of the 19th century, which were actually non-hereditary aristocracies, the contemporary idea of democracy combines the other two values: it is no longer about the *freedom* of a few over many but the progression toward an *equal-freedom*. When this is not the case, we can say there is no *social justice*. History and present reality are the result of the dialectical struggle between power and justice. One, power, seeks to perpetuate itself in darkness, and the other, justice, appeals to exposing reality to the light of day. It is in this historical and social sense that we can speak of *truth* or *lies*. Social and political truth is the revelation of what power hides to manipulate the current paradigm, that is, in our time, the paradigm of *equal-freedom*.

History is made and unmade by the dialectical pair of power and justice. Those who lack one specialize in the pursuit or exercise of the other. Politics is tasked with managing, through conflict, the socioeconomic power of a group, a country, or a region. Politics can be partisan or not, but in each group, the proportions of the pair differ. Some groups possess great social power through popular organizations and culture. Others sustain their political power through great economic power, which is expressed in other areas such as the culture industry and media ownership. Hence, the elections in liberal democracies are almost always resolved with a difference of a few percentage points, even though one group belongs to the concentrated economic power of one percent of society, and the other is sustained by the social power of the rest.

If we look at the specific and concrete case of current media and social media platforms, a solution toward that truth lies in the empowerment of democracy, that is, of equal-freedom, precisely what power seeks to limit by using the force of its economic and financial power to increase its economic and financial power.

From an institutional perspective, the solution lies neither in censorship nor in legal obstacles to the exercise of expression, whether by

journalists, intellectuals, or social media users. Countries governed by non-democratic regimes like China or Saudi Arabia can exercise censorship without major technical or cultural issues. Liberal democracies cannot, but, as we have seen, the manipulation of media and traditional press through propaganda has always been the solution power has found when it had to operate within these systems.

Although the regulation of social media through new laws may set some limits to the abuses of propaganda and the manipulation of public opinion, it will always be very timid. History shows that accumulated power, whether political or financial, always finds a way to gain an advantage. The solution for more democratic societies and less manipulated by traditional press, internet platforms, and eventually artificial intelligence is, simply, to erode or end the disproportionate accumulation of power.

In our world, that means limiting or ending the disproportionate accumulation of wealth. A healthy democracy should sabotage by all possible means the actions of lobbies and the whims of big investors, major political campaign donors, and the big clients and benefactors of traditional media. As for the power of platforms like Facebook or Twitter, the rights of private companies, which in the case of small and medium businesses reserve the right of admission, should be nullified. A mega-platform that has a billion users in its pocket should be considered of social interest, meaning societies should have voting rights as if they were shareholders (in fact, aren't they?), if we still believe that democracy should not be replaced by a plutocracy, equal-freedom by the freedom of capital.

A democracy is measured by two fundamental conditions: first, by the level of popular participation in the management and control of power; second, because the people, like any individual, often make mistakes, but on a larger scale, by the acceptance of their most radical critics. It's that simple and that difficult to implement.

But to understand our future, it is imperative to understand not only our history but also our prehistory. We will consider this human condition, that dark and distant reality that still lives within all of us, just as reptilian legs persist in the birds that now dominate our skies.

In turn, we will also see the ideological and financial consequences of exploiting these ancestral weaknesses, especially through the hypercommercialization of culture (the consumption of immediate pleasure and violence) in the most recent stage of capitalism. Like servile armies,

we will see the role of the media as opinion-makers or as distractors. The cliché of the press as the "Fourth Estate" has not been discredited, but its meaning has shifted from "the power of the people" to "the power of corporations." At the same time, as we will see, the other democratic and republican principle of the "Separation of Powers" has been revealed as another idealistic or utopian idea. If in liberal democracies the three main branches of government (Executive, Legislative, and Judicial) still maintain some legal independence from each other, they do not have it with respect to powerful corporations and big businesses, which are the main donors to presidential campaigns (executive), those who write the laws (legislative), and those who constantly pressure the courts (judicial) to approve or block laws passed in Congress. For the right, politics has always been the continuation of business by other means.

Not to mention the independence and the secret, unpunished actions of the Shadow Government (secret agencies and corporations), which has not a single ounce of republicanism, let alone democracy. We will also address this later in this book.

The Right to Truth and the Right to Extermination

IN THE EARLY 1980S, the powerful restaurant chain A&W launched a new burger to compete with McDonald's Quarter Pounder. At 1/3 of a pound, the A&W burger had more meat than the 1/4 Pounder, was cheaper, and in taste tests, customers rated it higher. A radio and television marketing campaign by A&W highlighted these advantages. However, the 1/3-pound burger failed because consumers thought it was smaller than the 1/4-pound burger. Why, they asked, should they pay the same for a third of a pound of meat as they did for a quarter of a pound at McDonald's? Isn't 4 bigger than 3?

This is what we might call "irrational ignorance," pathological or induced in consumer societies, paraphrasing a term used in academia. In economics, there is the concept of "rational ignorance," that is, when an individual or group makes a decision knowing they are not properly informed because the cost of becoming informed exceeds the benefits of a correct decision. On a social scale, we can observe that a citizen without

the time to conduct in-depth research on topics outside their expertise must rely on the research done by others. That's in the best-case scenario, because beyond a certain point, the habit of ignoring issues relevant to the life of a society produces an intellectual habit, the nullification of the critical faculty.[lviii] Moreover, if we live in a global culture based on distraction and the consumption of brief, immediate, and constant pleasures, rational ignorance becomes mere ignorance or, worse and more likely, "complicit ignorance." Hence, the greatest paradox for those of us who still believe in some form of democracy is that, at the same time, we believe in the great power of the irrational decisions of the people and in the high vulnerability of the manipulation of public opinion.

For this reason, for example, in the United States, we see frequent and legitimate marches against racism (against domestic racism, not imperialist racism), but not against the Shadow State, not demanding transparency from secret agencies and the super-private companies that have hundreds of millions of captive customers in their pockets.

In a real democracy, citizens oversee the government, not the other way around. In practice, the astronomical budgets and institutional networks of agencies like the NSA and CIA in the United States, GCHQ in England, Mossad in Israel, GIP in Saudi Arabia, FSB in Russia, or MSS in China ensure that this basic rule of citizen rights is applied in reverse, regardless of whether it is a liberal democracy or a communist-capitalist dictatorship like China's. One of the CIA's dogmas, "*Admit Nothing. Deny Everything. Make Counter-Accusations*" ("*Admit nothing. Deny everything. Accuse the accuser*"), has become not only the most widespread practice of all Shadow States but also of official states, of politicians competing for minor positions like the presidency, of the mainstream press, and of almost all the other dialectical soldiers of Social Media. What Power cannot tolerate or admit is an independent truth, like a jealous 19th-century husband.

Even in the West, whose governments pride themselves on being the champions of the "Free World," the right to the truth is very limited and only comes to light when someone leaks crucial information about

[lviii] In 1986, 24 percent of Americans did not know who their vice president had been in recent years (John Zaller, p. 16). A year earlier, half the population did not know that their country was in conflict with Nicaragua or who the Contras were, whom their government was funding (p. 25).

illegal activities.[lix] In 2005, the CIA destroyed the video tapes showing prisoners in Guantánamo being interrogated under torture. Several hundred of these prisoners, most of them declared innocent by Washington and described by the CIA itself as "*boys in the wrong place at the wrong time*" after more than a decade of torture and violations of all international Human Rights norms. The Agency's internal justification was that the images revealed by the videos were so horrific they could be "*devastating for the CIA*." Naturally, the devastation of innocent people doesn't matter to an empire that every year publishes reports on human rights violations in other countries.

When President Harry Truman created the CIA in 1947, he limited its scope of action to any country other than the United States to prevent it from becoming a new Gestapo. In fact, according to his words, the idea was to have an office that kept the president informed on global issues, never "*as a spy agency*." But General William Donovan disagreed: "*In a global and totalitarian war, intelligence must act globally and totalitarianly*."[126] Shortly after, President Truman created the NSA in 1952 to expand the jurisdiction of "information gathering" to U.S. territory. In any case, not only do the citizens of this country belong to a superior category compared to the rest of the world in legal terms, but extraterritorial zones like Guantánamo or the dozens of secret CIA prisons ("*black sites*," "dark sites" where no national or international law applies, as acknowledged by the Senate report itself) are havens of illegality where, in the name of freedom and democracy, anonymous and secret agents violate all human rights.[lx]

Freedom and democracy do not exist in the United States because of this systematic violation of others' human rights but in spite of it. They exist because of those who dare to expose these atrocities and are then accused of being unpatriotic or "endangering national security" and other criminal excuses.

[lix] In the words of Edward Snowden, "*what the Chinese government does openly to its citizens, the U.S. government is likely doing secretly to the world*". (*Permanent Record,* 2019, pg. 171)

[lx] Even private-official media like NBC reported it in side stories. The "*black sites*" from the ever-cooperative Poland to the perpetually complicated Afghanistan housed these illegal and lawless prisons, in some cases called "S*ite Cobal*" or "*Salt Pit*". (Windrem, R., & Reynolds, T. (2014, December 9). How the CIA Tried to "Break" Prisoners in "The Salt Pit." NBC News).

Our era is the stage for two great civilizational movements: the Enlightenment (dominant not in the majority of the world's population but as the paradigm of the intellectual vanguard of the world) and the Middle Ages, represented by a reaction against the Enlightenment based on two necessary and sufficient realities: (1) an economic structure increasingly similar to feudalism and (2) a religious culture that combines faith and factual reality as understood in the Middle Ages.

The differences, however, are alarming. The accumulated progress of science and technology has not caught up with the paralyzing reactions of social thought. As oppressive as the European Middle Ages were, as vandalistic as the fanaticism of the Crusades in the 12th and 13th centuries was, it never came close to questioning the existence of the human species on Earth as it is doing now. Not to mention the larger-scale dangers facing the rest of the flora and fauna of this planet we share. Of course, without us, none of that matters (and with us, even less).

By 2022, companies like Google had already achieved "quantum supremacy"; the laboratories of the main scientific centers had already programmed living cells as if they were computers; artificial intelligence had already solved our future desires and needs; teleportation had already ceased to be the stuff of science fiction novels, and the elimination of 40 percent of jobs within a couple of decades.

But humanity was still mired in old debates, in mental attitudes more befitting the 19th century, progressively hurtling like a bullet train toward the Middle Ages. For example, all this enormous human capital invested in technology continued to be invested in ancestral fears, in prehistoric obsessions like the tribe and the enemy. The main enemy, not that animal with the face of a lion but with the face of a human. Still, at the beginning of the highly technological 21st century, the greatest powers concentrated in states, secret agencies, and mega private companies continued to insist on the urgency of focusing all energies on "National Security." Something as tragically contradictory as having the power to blow up the entire planet, manipulate the DNA of humanity, all in the name of a fragment, a country founded centuries ago, or, even more primitive, of some facial features established by some evolutionary accident like slanted eyes, black skin, or blond hair. A fragment called tribe, nation, country. Just to give a concrete example and not to mention again Western imperialism, which continues to devastate peoples and the entire planet, let's consider the primary concern and objectives of the Chinese government

regarding the need to accelerate the development of technology and artificial intelligence even further to "*leverage strategic advantages for military competition*."[127]

Now, let's consider a process that has three major instances, which operate simultaneously in global superpowers and, even more clearly and influentially, in the current hegemonic superpower. In this book, I will develop each of these points in different chapters, but here I summarize them for brevity and clarity:

1. PARALLEL GOVERNMENTS. Even in a liberal democratic system like the United States (a limited and surveilled democracy), secret agencies like the NSA and its branches such as the CIA exist, plan, and decide on specific policies and actions, often beyond the knowledge of elected presidents and congress members. These super-powerful organizations are not only secret to the world and to U.S. citizens but also to the elected governments of this country. Although their primary and almost exclusive justification lies in "the defense of national security," their history and present demonstrate that they possess an *ideology* that has nothing to do with occasional mentions of "freedom" and "democracy" but rather their precise opposites: the destruction of democracies and the imposition of dictatorships in other countries, and the anti-democratic consolidation within their own country through secrecy, lies, lack of transparency, political and citizen oversight, and the protection of large corporations, especially national ones. All of this is carried out with the assistance of the most powerful (or at least the most expensive) military in the world and the complicity of the neocolonial armies of banana republics. All of which, in turn, is part of other lobbies and corporations, such as the military-industrial complex and, now also, the digital-military complex.

2. LOBBIES AND CORPORATIONS. It's an open secret, and it's entirely legal, the constant interference of "special interest groups" in governments, both in the presidency and in congress. For many years, we have known, through irrefutable evidence, that large companies and corporations write the laws in the drafting committees of congress, where they have an observer and a spokesperson "without a vote." As if that weren't enough, these corporations are the primary donors to the representatives and senators who are responsible for approving those very laws. Abroad, it was the large corporations that induced secret agencies like the CIA to destroy

democracies and install or support bloody military dictatorships, capitalist dictatorships "in defense of national security" and the interests of foreign corporations in the name of "freedom." Not only because of their track records, the very nature of any corporation is dictatorial, as dictatorial as the various fiefdoms of the Middle Ages.

3. MEDIA AND PUBLIC OPINION. Consciously or not, the major national and international media closed the deal by enabling the opinion of ordinary citizens to support decisions based on the interests of corporations as if they were their own. Thanks to media propaganda, the *parallel governments* and corporations were justified or forgiven by peoples terrified by the same discourse of "national security" and by a resistance (sometimes armed in distant countries) to the hijacking of democracies by the economic and financial elite.

Now, let's stop the world for a moment. Is it possible to imagine something so absurd and Machiavellian? Well, that's the current reality. There's no need to resort to any conspiracy theory. Everything, or almost everything, is in plain sight and publicly known. What the public ignores is, for the most part, declassified secrets, accessible to any researcher. Every time a scandal breaks that reflects state crimes, it naturally happens when someone leaks classified documents. Otherwise, we wouldn't learn about more brutal examples that constitute the rule but could enrage the people and demand the dissolution or budget cuts for one of these super agencies. In response, they turn to the aid of the victims themselves, who take up the excuse of "national security" and add "those who have nothing to hide have nothing to fear." Once again: the laws are written for those at the bottom, and the sermon is repeated for those at the bottom. No one thinks to question: "Well, if the super agencies have nothing to fear, why do they hide everything from their citizens?" Only a few senators who are part of the Security Committee have any idea of all these secret practices, a large part of which are completely illegal, such as assassinations and coups in other countries or the spying and surveillance of their own citizens. Even so, we know more than enough to scandalize any decent citizen of this or any other country. The only thing missing is to put the pieces in order and make the law that governs them conscious. But the effects are irrelevant.

Secrecy and manipulation range from commercial espionage on the internet to ideological and military espionage, as both are connected.

The practice of making major decisions relying on the ignorance of citizens is ancient, but when those citizens have the digital tools to find out something, deliberate secrecy is chosen. For example, in 2005, the foundations of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement, signed in 2016, began to be designed and approved. Good or bad, the fact is that the people of a dozen countries were not informed, and there was certainly no debate about the benefits of the agreement that sought, from the perspective of the United States, to replicate the Atlantic agreement with Europe in the Pacific basin (with 40 percent of world trade). The reason was that the primary stakeholders in the agreement were the largest corporations in each country. Through this agreement, equal and convenient rules would be established for that transnational micro-class. Convenient secrecy is achieved in two ways: (1) preventing crucial information from reaching the ears of the people and (2) distracting the people with a disproportionate dose of frivolity and distraction. As Robert McChesney summarized it, while the new trade deal was being cooked up, "*for every American who was informed about the TPP, there were tens of thousands who had not even heard of it but had participated in the debate about whether Kim Kardashian had gotten a butt implant*."[128] For the right or wrong reasons, it was President Trump who pulled the United States out of this agreement in 2017.

One way or another, this is the reality that has always dominated, especially over the last five centuries with the criminal brutality of Western empires, conveniently and hypocritically presented as conditions for peace, progress, and freedom. Blacks, mestizos, yellows, the poor in general, are dangerous beings who want to destroy the world by colonizing us or, directly, exterminating us. That's why we must do it first. The problem is that, as the same mentality persists, the exponential progress of technology is turning a short circuit into a nuclear catastrophe.

Are there alternatives to this project of global extermination? Of course there are, and one observation arises from the same illness. If we can speak (and act accordingly) of "national security," above the interests of some cities over others, of some provinces over others within the same country, why can't we speak of a "global security" above one country over another?

Let's discard for now the ideal that there are no secret agencies, no parallel governments, no hyper-concentrated political and economic power, no media at their service in the name of truth and popular interests.

Let's assume we are not so radical as to imagine a much better world. Let's assume we are going to negotiate with reality, with the current global power, that 99 percent of the world opts for the moderate option of begging the richest and most powerful one percent for a peaceful negotiation. Well, in that case, we would not propose one of the solutions to the abuse of secret governments, corporations, and media manipulation by changing the economic structure that orders them, such as proposing a greater and better redistribution of the wealth produced by humanity. Even so, even if the people degraded their demands for freedom and their rights to collective benefits, those products of human history, they could propose policies such as the creation of "oversight commissions," to give just one example that we have mentioned years before. Through this type of commission, instead of corporations having members in the drafting committees of congresses, the people would be guided, who would have representatives on the boards of companies that cross neighborhood boundaries to dictate the lives of millions of people. This is the case of super companies like Walmart, Microsoft, Apple, and any other that has the fate of thousands of employees and millions of customers on its payroll. The same applies to opinion-shaping media: the few traditional media companies and social networks should be accountable to that committee or popular commission regarding their algorithms, for example. Due to the international nature of these businesses, of all these phenomena, the transparency and truth commissions would have to be international, as would the laws that govern them.

Of course, to reach this stage of overcoming nationalism, the anachronistic nationalism that has been revived today must be overcome, not mysteriously but by the very logic of reactionary forces, manipulated by social media and other outlets. Based on what we have just explained, it is logical that the corporations of the 0.1 percent are very interested in avoiding or delaying this overcoming of nationalism, which could lead to the loss of their privileges and the death of their global dominance. That elite that dominates governments, that decides algorithms, that acts with impunity on a global scale, must inoculate the opposite in its vassals and consumers: nationalism, tribalism, fragmentation, conflict, noise, distraction.

But if this shift toward the exercise of the "right to the truth" and the "right to the benefits of Humanity" does not occur through negotiation, it will happen through extremely violent events.

Someone told me in 2007 that the warnings of ecologists and "redistributionists" about the dangers Humanity could face if current conditions persist over time, that Humanity had gone through many moments when people announced the end of the world and, for obvious reasons, the world has not yet ended. Beyond those millenarians who based their beliefs on religious interpretations, it is necessary to understand that I cannot say I will never die because I have never died before.

The difference is obvious: history does not record any experience of the destruction of humanity. If it ever happened, we have no memory of that trauma to even consider it. But if we cannot rely on memory, on experience, we can rely on reason. We can, but we do not want to.

The power of words

YEARS AGO, WHILE DINING AT A PROFESSOR friend's house, an engineer from the University of Texas kindly reproached me for having switched from architecture to literature. The reproach was not because history had lost something (I was never good at either) but because the change seemed like a critique, if not a symbolic betrayal, of one specialty toward the other.

My response at the time was merely a recollection of something I had written somewhere: "I switched disciplines when I realized that reality was made more of words than bricks." It wasn't a good personal reason, but it was a verifiable one, after all.

Shortly after, I took a stroll through the university's main library. Some books and documents I had requested had arrived, the five thousand pages of the Investigation on the Disappeared in Uruguay, among others. I took the opportunity to lose myself among the shelves. The silence and the smell of libraries stimulate curiosity and imagination. I wandered through the history of 13th-century Russia, through Cro-Magnon France, through the primitive Theory of Relativity by Poincaré, through a letter from Einstein to the President of the United States, through World War II.

Then, inevitably, I drifted to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I recalled a discussion with someone who defended the atomic bombs as necessary to end World War II. I think I suggested moving the Hiroshima museum to Washington or some part of the world where it could serve to teach

something. I have argued so many times about so many things that I don't even remember that red-cheeked, Hulk Hogan-mustached guy. I wonder if I follow them or they follow me. I don't think it was a colleague because they are not very original in this. They have all rejected such an *act of humanism* that ended the war, thus avoiding the death of thousands of innocents if more traditional methods had been used.

I went down to the archives room and read the magazines from that time. 1943, 1944, 1945. February, March, April. The war news appeared fragmented among the inevitable advertisements of happiness, almost all based on technological proliferation. Air highways, air-conditioned cars. "*Asado in the Argentine*", at the time recognized in advertising as an "industrial giant."

For better or worse, the Americans shaped our postmodern world. Even today, their obsessions and fantasies are reborn in the most unexpected places on the planet under different flags. However, every Athens, every Rome has its own disasters, its catastrophes that are difficult to repeat.

Difficult, though not impossible. The August 13 issue of *Time* quotes Truman, who reported: "*Sixteen hours ago, an American plane dropped a bomb on Hiroshima, an important Japanese army base. That bomb had more power than 20,000 tons of TNT... It is an atomic bomb. It is a harnessing of the basic power of the universe; what has been done is the greatest achievement of science in its history...* [...] *we are now prepared to destroy more rapidly and completely all the productive enterprises the Japanese have on their soil... if they do not accept our terms, they can expect a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on this earth*." In London, Winston Churchill also spoke of these scientific feats: "*we must pray that this horror will lead to peace among nations and that, instead of wreaking immeasurable havoc across the world, it will become the perennial source of global prosperity*."[129]

On its August 20 cover, the same magazine greeted readers with a large red disk on a white background and an X crossing it out. It was not the first atomic bomb in history dropped on a population of human beings but the sun or the flag of Japan. On page 29, an article titled "*Awful Responsibility*" ("A Terrible Responsibility"), President Truman outlined what would later become the past. Like a good man of faith whenever placed in power by God, Truman acknowledged: "*We give thanks to God that this has come to us rather than to our enemies. And we pray that He may*

guide us to use it in His way and for His purposes."[130] In the semantic inversion of subject-object, by "this" he refers to the atomic bomb that "has come to us"; by "our enemies," obviously, he means Hitler and Hirohito; by "us," to us, the protected of God.

There is no doubt that Hitler and Hirohito were criminals. Criminals, murderers from a humanist, secular perspective. From a religious perspective, they were two demons. One of them Christian, in his own way. Truman, who can be credited with part of the liberation of Europe, thus halting or mitigating the Jewish Holocaust, is not simultaneously accused of being a criminal. Like in a soap opera, one is either good or bad, but not both at the same time. Because according to the Judeo-Christian-Muslim religious mindset, intermediate states, human life, and purgatory are temporary, almost nonexistent. There is no room for gray tones; one is either an angel or a demon, in heaven or hell. Therefore, it was natural to think that God was on one side and that He was in favor of dropping a couple of atomic bombs ("in His way and for His purposes") on cities full of men, women, and children who, only with a great effort of imagination and the help of the Holy Inquisition, could we attribute any mortal responsibility to.

In the magazine, no mention of the number of victims. Much less of the victims themselves. Only some percentages, which never give a sense of the real scale of the object measured in relative terms. Because one cannot be an instrument of God or of good while having eliminated so many innocents. Unless one compares Hiroshima and Nagasaki to Sodom and Gomorrah. In the Middle Ages, the number of dead was exaggerated in the name of God. Now the numbers have skyrocketed, but no one speaks of the dead who turn a soldier into a hero and a commander into a spiritual leader.

In the next issue of *Time*, in a corner of page 92, a few lines report that along with the disappearance of thirty percent of Nagasaki, the Jesuit community, the oldest Christian community in Japan, also disappeared. But all for a good cause.

The principle attributed to Machiavelli that "the ends justify the means," so common in the political revolutions and counterrevolutions of the Modern Era, found its postmodern ally in its exact inverse*: the means justify the ends*. Thanks to the media, the words of a powerful man can override any reality. Now, if one is a poor devil, reality will run them over. Even if one is an inconvenient celebrity. In 2002, Armando Maradona was

banned from entering Japan to attend the World Cup. Bluntly, Maradona responded: "*I didn't kill anyone, and I respect Japanese laws; I didn't drop any nuclear bombs on them; if they want to protect the Japanese, they shouldn't allow the American players to enter*."[131] Blunt but inconsequential. The reality created by power is always stronger than that revealed by its critics.

If reality doesn't fit the words, too bad for reality. It doesn't matter if that reality is an atomic bomb and thousands of deaths. What matters is what we will say and what we will hear about them. After all, daily reality is nothing more than what we perceive and understand (or want to understand) as real.

I have a strong suspicion that there is a real reality, the truth, which is always the first and last victim of any unchecked power. But what is the press if not the near-monopoly, the dominion, or the predominance of the word? And the word weighs more than any silent reality. In 1998, the three most important media outlets in Sweden were in favor of the "free market" ideology, even though the majority of the population was against it, favoring unions and state social programs. As a result, the government was maintained between the Social Democratic Party (with the progressive loss of power of the Swedish left) and the Moderate Party (in the West, "moderate" means "liberal-conservative in economics").

The struggle for the semantic field

BEFORE ENTERING THE FACULTY of Architecture in 1988, I had to go through a pre-university program in Uruguay known as "Scientific Orientation," where mathematics played the central role in the education of teenagers. The intense experience at that age left me with an epistemological mark: the idea that what we call *truth* or a *valid thought* requires some prior conditions, clear principles, like an axiom, premises, a hypothesis, a theorem, a proof, and a corollary. To give a simple example: the transitive property (if A is greater than B and B is greater than C, *ergo* A is greater than C) is an irrefutable deductive exercise. From two observations, a third fact is derived by simple logic, one that is neither present nor observable.

However, once I left architecture (especially structural calculations and some math classes in the public pre-university to supplement my meager salary) for the humanities, the first thing that struck me was not just the obvious fact that human reality is more dramatic and complex than scientific abstraction, but that the method of analysis is simpler and less reliable. The more variables, the less deductive rigor. This does not mean a renunciation of rational thought but rather the need for other intellectual tools, just as a chess game can be won by a supercomputer based on pure probability calculations, but a human, in the end, must rely on their professional intuition. In general, I observed, with silent obsession, that essays often boiled down to A = A. In *Critique of Pure Passion* (1998), I noted that, at the end of all pure mathematical speculation, everything also reduces to A = A (only the second A is full of variants, full of other realities represented in symbols). But in humanistic, essayistic reflection and analysis, that formula reduced to *A is A*. Using samples of reality, the author had to convince, rather than prove, that *A is K* and *K is not N* (C+ and C- in *The Narration of the Invisible*).

This "is" is evident and repetitive in authors like the Mexican poet and Nobel laureate Octavio Paz. Others, like the Argentine writer Ernesto Sábato, perhaps because he was a doctor in nuclear physics, used more "therefore" or "reason why." Of course, in essays, the most used method is induction, while fiction already escapes these rational limits: its truth, definitively, has nothing to do with logic but with empathy and inner emotion. Reflection in a novel, a short story, or a poem has very little to do with rationality and much more to do with emotional reflection, just as what we see in a mirror is a sensitive, not deductive, reflection of our face and, very often, of our own inner self.

Here's what matters most to us now: in social narrative, often referred to as "ideological narrative" or "political narrative," the "is," the mathematical equivalent "=," dominates and is reduced to a few slogans or clichés. If we add to this the hyper-fragmentation of postmodern and neo-medieval thought on social media, the parts don't

necessarily have to be related ("A Ford *is* an erection," "love *is* hate," "the homeland *is* God," etc.). The relationship stems from the same micro-narrative operation, that is, from dictation. ("What time is it, soldier?" "Whatever you say, General.")

In early 2005, I defended my master's thesis at the University of Georgia, *The Narration of the Invisible: A Political Theory of Semantic Fields*. Essentially, the study focused on the social struggle over narrative, over the control of truth through the control of language (particularly *ideolexicons*, a neologism added a year later) and the resulting successes and defeats between power and the social groups opposing it. As an example and initial metaphor, I used a photograph that had deeply impressed me during my first year in the United States: in 1959, a group of protesters in Little Rock, Arkansas, marched with signs stating "*Governor Fabus, Save Our Christian America*" and "*Race Mixing Is Communism*." What caught my attention wasn't the statement on the second sign but its dialectical nature, its purpose, and its social and historical effects. Not because it was an oddity, but quite the opposite.

Here, the aforementioned "is" (*is*) appeared as a *connector* to a supposed "proof" of a truth, which in reality reflected an attitude of "revelation" typical of groups whose intellect has been trained since childhood in a church. There was no induction, no abduction, and certainly no deduction. Only a dictation, a revelation, of the same epistemological category as any religious revelation. A revelation that didn't even have a sacred scripture to connect it (religare), as if religion had freed itself from its own god to fulfill political purposes, to defend social interests more directly.

To summarize briefly, in my 2004 thesis, I attempted to analyze and contrast, from this semantic perspective, various epistemological discourses, from classics of the left, such as *The Open Veins of Latin America* by Eduardo Galeano, to responses from the political right, such as *The Twisted Roots of Latin America* by Alberto Montaner, passing through other European (Unamuno/Ortega y Gasset) and Latin American (Sarmiento/Alberdi) texts. The result was clear:

as in chess, in social narrative there was (and is) a struggle between two opponents for the center of the board. A positive semantic field (C+) that must be defined in its boundaries as clearly as possible (what is) and a negative semantic field (C-, what is not). "Social justice is W, not Z." "Freedom is X, but not Y."

Now, to achieve success in this semantic struggle, another dialectical level is necessary: *valuation*. That is, "X is good; Y is bad." How to win the battle of positive and negative valuation over the positive and negative fields? By association. In the case of *"Race Mixing Is Communism*," we are dealing with two semantic fields defined at the time, but with two opposing valuations. The first term (*racial integration*) is the term in dispute. The second (*communism*) has already been defined and confirmed in its social valuation (it is negative). Therefore, it is necessary to associate the disputed term with the consolidated term so that the latter confers negativity to the former through the binding equivalent "is." ("*Social Distance = Communism*", 2020).[lxi]

Everyone knows that, in this specific case, the struggle over the meaning by this group—which, in a world dominated by capitalist ideology, sought to associate racial integration with communism—failed. The demonized Civil Rights groups of the 1960s achieved one of those rare, decisive victories of the underdogs over the ideology and power of those above. Partial and reversible, like everything, it's true. But a victory nonetheless.

However, the victories of capitalism over semantic fields are numerous and overwhelming. It would suffice to mention just one, among the less obvious. One of them is based on the simplicity of a supposed law, simple as a requirement of conservative narrative. In the face of any questioning of a given social order, the famous *Law of Supply and Demand* is repeatedly invoked. I believe the old disputes between Anglo-Saxon economists like John Keynes and Milton Friedman should be enough to understand that *the Law of*

[lxi] In this semantic struggle, there are other strategies or unforeseen outcomes, such as the emptying of meaning. This is what happens with expressions like "I'm not racist," which nowadays holds little to no semantic value.

Supply and Demand is full of politics. Market decisions do not obey a natural law but rather political decisions that benefit some or others, those in power or those below who threaten to turn the order upside down.

In the past, it was the churches that created the illusion that a large institution could be politically neutral. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Theology of Liberation in Latin America destroyed that myth, which was later reinstated in the Anglo-Saxon North with the reaction of the 1980s. A similar myth arose with the absurd idea that with the fall of the Berlin Wall, ideologies had ended, as if the wall had fallen on the head of every inhabitant of the globe and left them in a vegetative state, incapable of connecting two ideas, the minimum condition for having an ideology. Politicians around the world, especially those on the right or aligned with it, filled their mouths and won elections with the cliché of "The Death of Ideologies." While Professor Francis Fukuyama was doing his work of ideological evangelization with *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), another Harvard professor, Samuel Huntington, articulated the second leg of the final assault on the planet by neoliberalism with his theory of the *Clash of Civilizations* (1996). Who knows if it was all by chance.

Although the churches, especially the Protestant ones, did not relinquish all their power to define semantic fields, in aid of this war of meanings, the mainstream press continued its traditional role in support of dominant institutions and corporations. According to the influential British newspaper *Financial Times*, for example, the best way for a capitalist democracy to be successful is "the depoliticization of the economy. *"the depoliticization of the economy*."[132] As the ecclesiastical tradition demonstrates, there is nothing more brutally political and ideological than convincing a majority of the neutrality of the economic power of a society. Reality does not change, but (and for that very reason) its representation does. Usually, the narration of reality by an established power always creates a parallel and opposite world, something we previously called "the culture of

masks," synthesized in the popular masked hero, the male figure of dual personality who fights for freedom and justice and always triumphs through the use of force. Noam Chomsky, analyzing the report by Samuel Huntington and Joji Watanuki titled *The Crisis of Democracy: Report on the Governability of Democracies to the Trilateral Commission* (1975), observed that when in the 1960s people began to demand and participate in politics, they began to speak of a "crisis of democracy."[133] In her brilliant analysis of the origins of capitalism, historian Ellen Meiksins Wood observed that, in its origins, the property-owning class and those in political power never called themselves "producers." Later, capitalists who appropriated others' production through capital investment with the aim of making profits appropriated this term.[134] In Latin America, the word "producers" is still reserved for those who participate in the agricultural sector, but increasingly this term has shifted from the laborer and peasant directly connected to cultivation to the landowning or estate-owning class, mostly the traditional oligarchy dominant in business, politics, and the press of underdeveloped republics on the margins of the imperial sphere of the North, which, in turn, ensured them capital and political status quo through armies and coups d'état when politics, judicial institutions, and press coups were not enough. At the same time, during the most radical phase of capitalist ideology, the neoliberal one, the Trickle-Down Theory was successfully and almost completely inoculated. This theory explicitly spread and solidified the idea that "the rich are the ones who create jobs." Workers, the wage-earning creators, only passively benefit from that prosperity. All of this is consistent with the 19th-century slaveholder narrative and the representation by the press and Hollywood in the following century, according to which slaves (because of their race) and workers (because of their poverty) are dangerous individuals who, if granted any kind of freedom, are capable of organizing to destroy civilization.

The dialectic of propaganda proceeds through *free associations* and, in general, narrates a reality opposite (the mask, the

double personality) to the one maintained by the power that narrates it. In contrast, the dialectic of the essay and academic research is conditioned. Even when those of us who practice it have our own political ideas and do not claim to be neutral in a world that is not, we are conditioned by reality in a way that fiction and propaganda are not. Propaganda, unlike fiction, does not aim to explore any inner reality but to impose an interest (a product, a policy) on the rest of society.

The essay and academic analysis are, in different ways, *conditioned narratives*: they must provide a narrative, an explanation of reality by integrating facts accepted by a community of other specialists. When Darwin read a study showing that the appearance of flowers occurred millions of years ago in a very brief period, which called his entire Theory of Evolution into question (nature does not make leaps), he did not deny the discovery but tried to explain it within the general framework of his theory, something that preoccupied him with anguish in his final years. In any other case, one of the ways to refute an essay is to find an example that does not fit or contradicts the proposed theory, which in the humanities continues to be an integrative narrative of prior conditions. Neither honest fiction nor dishonest propaganda would ever concern themselves with external facts.

I must not dwell further on this point, but I believe it is necessary to understand it in order to understand the rest of this book, which deals with propaganda and the narrative domination of societies. It goes without saying that this semantic battle reproduces the historical battle between power and justice, that is, in our time, between those who accumulate money and political power and those who organize from below.

From a dialectical perspective, the analysis of semantic fields is anti-Marxist in the sense that it does not directly relate the material conditions of production and consumption to the values and meanings of a society. However, the Semantic War and the Marxist reading (the *base* as defining the *superstructure*) are complementary.

Lobbies and the Administration of Legal Meaning

NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONS often employ language open to interpretation due to the need to encompass a much wider variety of possible cases than any law. Even more so when it comes to a constitution, like that of the United States, written over two centuries ago by people who had no idea of today's reality. For this reason, the constitution is read like any religious text thousands of years old: its sacredness and obscurity grow over time, which is why the theological and political struggle focuses on its interpretation.

In republics, that interpretation is administered by congresses and, ultimately, by supreme courts—both institutions deeply political, despite the need for sacredness to present the latter as a body composed of impartial legal technicians, something that is refuted only by the partisan debates for the election and confirmation of its members.

How to manipulate and solidify the meaning of a line in the constitution that will affect the life and death of millions of people for generations? The powerful lobbies in the United States explain it very well with concrete examples and successes: as in the history of any marginal sect that becomes dominant, as in the history of any religion that maintains political power for centuries, it is essentially an *unequal struggle for the semantic field* (now known as the "culture war"). It usually takes a good amount of time, but lobbies are not lacking in organization, money, or a religious patience that goes beyond the anxieties of small businesses.

Let's look at the relevant case of the Second Amendment. According to the Supreme Court in 1939 (United States v. Miller, 307 U.S. 174), the protection of gun ownership under the Second Amendment applied to membership in "a well-regulated militia" rather than an individual right. The increase in street violence during the 1960s led to greater regulation of firearms, limiting possession to drug addicts and people with psychiatric issues, which triggered a reaction from the lobby in the 1970s. From then on, the National Rifle Association (NRA) began creating files on every member of Congress and the White House "*using computerized data to exert influence over elected officials*." According to a recent investigation by The New York Times, an internal NRA document dated April 1983

established the long-term goal and immediate strategy: "*when a gun control case reaches the Supreme Court, we want the clerks of the justices to find existing precedents from law review articles and lower court cases that defend individual rights*." In an internal report from the same year, the NRA identified its main enemies: "*academics, intellectuals, politicians, educators, religious leaders, and, to some extent, business and financial leaders of the country*."[135]

Not all politicians were enemies of the NRA. Some were on its boards, like Congressman John D. Dingell Jr., who represented Michigan in Washington for 56 years, a position he meritoriously inherited from his father. This is possible because, according to legislation, lawmakers can serve as unpaid directors of nonprofit organizations. The NRA is classified by the government as a "social welfare" nonprofit organization.

In December 1963, after Kennedy's assassination with a rifle purchased through an NRA advertisement, Dingell warned in a hearing about "*a growing prejudice against firearms*" and defended the purchase of guns by mail. Ten years later, from Congress, he affirmed the need to use "*all available resources at all levels to influence the decision-making process*" in favor of the gun lobby.[136]

Finally, in 2008, the lobby's influence over social and media language reached the critical literary interpretation of the Supreme Court, which established gun ownership as an individual right, forcing all courts from that level down to accept the new conservative interpretation. In 2022, the Supreme Court (with a majority of members appointed by conservative presidents, some of whom were criticized for receiving gifts and favors from their millionaire friends) ruled that it is unconstitutional to limit the right to carry guns in public based on a specific reason, as the state of New York had done.

Not counting the legal and illegal trafficking of guns to countries like Mexico, currently, in the United States alone, there are 400 million firearms in civilian hands. The number of AR-15-style rifles went from 400,000 in 2006 to 2.8 million in 2020. All in the name of freedom and the correct interpretation of a line of text written in 1791.

Cyber Tribes

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE FRAGMENTED DISCOURSE that followed the era of newspapers and television are a phenomenon similar to what the movable type printing press produced in the mid-15th century. The Catholic Church lost its monopoly on administering dogma through sermons, and Protestants produced an archipelago of churches and sects of all kinds. The fanaticism of previous centuries was not overcome; only its control was lost.

With the internet, written culture returned, and social media gave more importance to writing than to reading. Writing as immediate and uninformed opinion. To make it easier, this irresistible urge to opine before any complete intellectual process about an event soon shifted to the micro-video format. The self became banalized and globalized: "*here, me with myself*." To a large extent, this phenomenon is not disconnected from the commercialization process that the media and the cultural industry underwent, which began in the early decades of the 20th century. Now the self is the product that must be sold. It doesn't matter its quality but its advertising. If it sells, it's true.

In 1983, sociologist and New York representative Daniel Patrick Moynihan wrote in the *Washington Post* a simple idea (not entirely original) that would be quoted many times after his death in 2004: "*Everyone is entitled to their own opinions, but no one is entitled to their own facts*." But what is a fact? In their book *Like War* (2018), P. W. Singer and Emerson Brooking reasonably reflect that "*facts depend on consensus; when we remove that consensus, facts become a matter of opinion*."[137]

This is where we've arrived in the Age of the Internet and Social Media. Lies and propaganda have always existed, but until recently, there was some acceptance of documentary evidence, such as the declassification of a document or the acknowledgment of a key figure in a particular event. Gradually, a "political pornography" has taken hold, where the consumer wants to be deceived, and the value of the deception lies not in any factual truth but in the plausibility of the lie or, even better, in the satisfaction of the consumer's desire.[138]

This is a psychological factor that runs through the historical and cultural phenomenon. In his 1906 autobiography, Mark Twain had already lamented: "How easy it is to make people believe a lie, and how hard

it is to convince them that they've been deceived."[139] Similar ideas are attributed to Baltasar Gracián and other writers who lived centuries earlier. More recently, the phenomenon has been classified as "homophily": generally, people believe in anything that aligns with their desires. If someone has heard or read an idea (propaganda) multiple times, no matter how absurd, they are more likely to consider it correct, true, regardless of the lack of evidence. It has been said that believers in the flat Earth as a pizza were insignificant for centuries until the Internet arrived. Then, what U.S. Army Colonel Robert L. Bateman, author of *Digital War: A View from the Front Lines* (1999), summed up in a single sentence occurred: "*Before, every village, every town had its idiot; the Internet brought them all together*."

We can suspect that the atomization of digital tribes will, sooner or later, lead to the same process we already know from history and prehistory: a successive progression of alliances based on common or vaguely similar ideological elements, the reduction of diverse family totems to a minimal national number, until, in the end, only two opponents remain, as in soccer, as in any war. Perhaps this is part of a genetic material that has accompanied us since prehistory: the struggle and the need to fight against an enemy that is always one and that always generates a bipolar world, from the most innocent elections in a democratic country (which are always decided by one, two, or three percent) to wars like World War II, with "Allies" fighting against the "Axis," even though the former included American post-Nazis and Soviet communists, and the latter included German Nazis, Italian fascists, and Japanese imperialists, that is, representatives of the "superior race" allied with powers of the "inferior races."

This is where we've arrived

ALTHOUGH THERE ARE MANY METHODS to choose the happiest countries on the planet, they are more statistical superstitions of the communications market than any possible reality. It is very difficult to measure the level of happiness or satisfaction in humans. Ironically or not, in a civilization proud of its high technology and artificial intelligences, there is no

happiness meter that measures feelings, precisely what should be the most important thing.

More than difficult, it is impossible to measure and compare the level of happiness of different societies and civilizations throughout human history. The only thing we can do is compare different historical moments based on qualitative results. It is beyond any serious discussion that capitalism did not invent the sciences, nor philosophy, nor the technologies that lifted the majority of the population out of hunger. Capitalism has only been a practical instrument of accumulation, both of resources and of moral sermons. In fact, it practically invented nothing beyond new (and very effective) forms of coercion and accumulation.

It is not my intention to idealize or romanticize the past, but neither do I accept the classic sermon of the hegemonic narrative with the intellectual obedience that the mainstream media and popular myths expect and demand without any critical perspective. A repeated argument is that before capitalism, people were poorer and died younger. A narrative that has no more foundation than its own words, as in any religion. You must believe; otherwise, you are a dangerous heretic. But as for evidence, there is none.

Before the rise of capitalism in the 16th century, in regions as diverse as Asia, the Americas, Africa, and Europe itself, people worked half as many days a year and fewer hours a day than they do now, and their living conditions were, by far, better. Yet Asians, Africans, and Americans were not poorer five centuries ago than in the 20th century. There were no homeless or landless people. One could mention exceptions, but that's all they are. Life expectancy in the Americas was in many places 41 years, as in Mexico (especially outside of gigantic cities like Tenochtitlan, which were, in any case, larger, cleaner, and better organized than cities like London or Paris), that is, a third longer than after four centuries of progress bestowed by the civilizing empires. The same could be said of China and Japan.

The indigenous peoples of the Americas were more hygienic than Europeans, lived longer, worked fewer hours, ate better, and were taller. The latter, according to anthropologists, is one of the most solid quantitative indicators for measuring social well-being. The English reached a maximum height of between 167 and 170 centimeters after the arrival of the Romans in the 3rd century with their water channels and better food. Almost a thousand years later, life expectancy in England fell from 40 years

in 1500 to 35 in 1750, and the average height dropped to 167 centimeters. According to contemporary research, the reason lay in poor living conditions and greater social inequalities during the centuries of the Industrial Revolution, but the dates coincide with the birth and dominance of capitalism.[140] In the English and Dutch colonies, from Ireland to Africa and India, the statistics were, by far, even worse in the deterioration of the lives of ordinary people over several centuries of capitalist brutality.

In Latin America, we have all heard phrases like "he was a tall gringo, like all gringos." Height was not only a sign of distinction for developed countries but, since the 19th century, it was also proof of the racial superiority of the settlers and inhabitants of the imperial metropolises. In contrast to the European situation and current beliefs, by 1800, Native Americans were the healthiest and tallest population in the world. In his letters and chronicles, Amerigo Vespucci makes the same observation that Christopher Columbus had made in his journals a few years earlier, referring to the inhabitants of the Caribbean: "*There were so many people it was a marvel, and all were unarmed and peaceful; we went ashore in boats, and they received us with great love*." Unrequited love: "*at the end of the battle, they were left in a bad state against us, for as they were naked, we always inflicted great slaughter on them, and it often happened that 16 of us fought 2,000 of them and in the end routed them, killing many and plundering their homes*." The natives, he says at another point (something that would impress Thomas More and inspire him to write *Utopia*), "*have no boundaries of kingdoms or provinces: they have no king: they obey no one, each is his own master, neither friendship nor gratitude, which is not necessary for them, for greed does not reign among them: they live communally in houses made in the manner of very large and common huts… marvelous huts, for I have seen houses 220 paces long and 30 wide, skillfully built, and in one of these there were 500 or 600 souls*." Vespucci not only mentions that the natives of South America were very healthy and numerous, to the point of finding four generations living in the same house and with the strange habit of bathing frequently, but they were also very tall. When in new explorations they find exceptionally large women who bring them refreshments, Vespucci and his soldiers agree "*to kidnap two of them, who were fifteen-year-old girls, to make a gift to these Kings*."[141]

As a preview of what was to come (and what survives today in the dominant narrative fabric), simply discovering that there were other ways of existing and, perhaps, of being happy, set off all the alarms. The "bad

example" provoked visceral reactions. Vespucci himself complained about the criticism he received from his European contemporaries, not for his crimes: "*they slander me because I said that those inhabitants do not value gold or other riches*," he wrote.[142]

The testimonies of Amerigo Vespucci have also been discredited as "exaggerations" by 19th-century writers and even some more recent ones, just like the denunciations of Father Bartolomé de las Casas, but historians and anthropologists themselves have confirmed many of these old chronicles.[lxii] For example, beyond the stories of giants in the far south and far north of the continent, anthropological studies leave no doubt about the difference. In North America, from the warm Florida to the cold Canada, the average height of the natives in 1800 was 173 centimeters, more than that of Europeans and settlers. Researchers attribute this difference to more favorable socioeconomic conditions, not genetics.[143] According to Professor Richard Steckel, Native Americans lived in egalitarian societies that provided a strong safety net for the disadvantaged, meaning no one went hungry or was neglected. "*The Plains Indians had a remarkable record of nutritional success and good health, despite the enormous pressures they were under. They had developed a healthy lifestyle that white Americans could not match, even with all their technological advantages*."[144] This conclusion is shared by a large number of specialists and even administrators and politicians in Washington in the 19th century.[lxiii] After centuries of dispossession, slavery, and imperial and capitalist progress, by the early 20th century, life expectancy barely reached 29 years. Not despite but because

[lxii] One of the favorite writers of Spanish Catholic nationalism, Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, in 1895 labeled Bartolomé de las Casas as an "intolerant fanatic" and his *Brief Account [Chronicle] of the Destruction of the Indies* as a "monstrous delirium." (Bartolomé de las Casas, *Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies*. [Seville, 1552] Edited by André Saint-Lu. Madrid: Cátedra, 1984.) Menéndez Pidal developed the thesis of De las Casas's mental illness, labeling it "paranoia," without caring that Hernán Cortés himself confessed to similar or worse horrors. In the 20th century, John Tate Lanning refuted Las Casas's figures (50 million Indians killed by the Spanish in one generation) by arguing that "*if every Spaniard on Bermúdez Plata's list… had killed one Indian every workday and on Sundays during the fifty years immediately following the discovery, it would have taken a generation to reach the number attributed to him by his compatriot*". Lanning omits other forms of extermination, such as dispossession, famine, and slavery (not to mention diseases) and the testimonies of the explorers and conquerors themselves, who spoke not of one death per Spaniard but of hundreds and thousands in any of their exploits. In any case, if we change 50 million to one or two million, at any point in history it would have been a genocide, just like the Armenian genocide during the second decade of the 20th century.

[lxiii] We delved into this topic in *The Savage Frontier* (2021), where more data and details can be found.

the majority of the population had to work more days a year and more hours a day to meet the demands of the "free market" and the comfort of the "superior race," first, and later the "superior work culture" in Europe and the United States.

To refer to more recent times, it is enough to recall that, despite the speeches and media-driven development plans of poor countries, since 1960, the income per capita gap between the South and the North has tripled. In the year 1500, such a gap did not even exist. It is not just that the North made progress but that the South was systematically exploited and destroyed by a fanatical and militaristic force never before seen in the annals of history, which, paradoxically and logically, sold itself as legitimate and the source of all superior civilization. Moreover: it portrayed itself as the victim whenever possible and with all its media arsenal.

V. History: The (Geo)Political Framework

A Very Brief History of Manipulation

Imperial Democracies, Solidarity Dictatorships

History leaves little room for exceptions: under the cry of *democracy*, the dispossession of other nations was practiced; under the cry of *freedom*, the most brutal and industrial forms of imperialism were expanded. All this was almost always perpetuated by democracies, not dictatorships. Not by chance, Theodore Roosevelt wrote that "the democracy of this century needs no further justification for its existence than the simple fact that it has been organized so that the white race may take the best lands of the New World."145

Generally, colonial and post-colonial dictatorships (almost all functional dictatorships and almost by exception resistant dictatorships) were the logical consequence of these democratic empires. All under an old logic. In ancient Greece, Athens was a democracy very similar to the democracies of the last few centuries: it had temporary slaves, tolerated some diversity, and boasted of accepting immigrants from other peoples; a few voted, and its imposition over other Greek peoples, like Sparta, was based on the strength of its money. Two thousand years later, modern empires always had the luxury of boasting democracy, tolerance for diversity, and different opinions in their streets… Of course, as long as their power had no competition and as long as they continued to impose and practice the opposite in the colonies (where criticism was more dangerous) for the economic benefit of the civilized metropolis.

The modern history of so-called democracies as systems-of-shared-power-by-the-dominant-class, held together by their capital and oligopolies, was more dictatorial, imperialist, and brutal toward other nations than actual dictatorships. Perhaps because they were driven by the same arrogance of considering themselves benevolent. Perhaps because almost

all those empires were capitalist. This was the case (for both reasons) with the brutal British, Dutch, French, and American empires. This continues to happen with the warmongering of NATO, composed of countries with liberal democratic systems—all hijacked by the financial elite, as they once were by industrial capital. Further on the periphery, for example, one of the most recurring arguments justifying the long and brutal apartheid of Israeli governments is that the country "is the only democracy in the Middle East." Even if it were a full democracy and not a limited one, this does not authorize or justify its government to dispose of another nation, Palestine, at its whim and by the force of its arms—denying in practice the political existence of an entire people under the pretext that some in their independentist resistance do not recognize its existence.

Why were the greatest global dictatorships national democracies, while dictatorships like Cuba's or Libya's, on the contrary, stood in solidarity with colonies and the oppressed of the world? What explains this (apparent) paradox? Perhaps the dictators were more cautious out of fear of losing power? Perhaps because those dictatorships were born from the struggle against the genocidal brutality of imperialisms? Perhaps what we call *democracy* is not the democracy of Native Americans (like the Iroquois Confederacy before it was destroyed by the civilized settlers), but something very different: the democracy as understood and fossilized by the Anglo-Saxons, based on dispossession, the displacement of the *other* and the defense of *our* private property?

This was the case with ancient Athenian democracy and with the Northwestern democracies of the Modern Era. The victims are always guilty of threatening their masters, who, in the face of any change, are compensated for their economic losses, as every time slavery was abolished or a colony achieved its independence. Thus, the invaded are the invaders. The massacred are the violent. The corrupted are the corrupt. Those assaulted, starved, and exterminated for centuries for the benefit of developed countries are the only ones responsible for their poverty.

Freedom of expression in the age of slavery

ON JANUARY 1, 1831, in Massachusetts, *The Liberator*, the first abolitionist newspaper in the country and, later, a defender of women's suffrage, appeared. At the time, slaveholders in Georgia offered a reward of $5,000 (over $160,000 in 2023 value) for the capture of its founder, William Lloyd Garrison. Naturally, this is how power reacts to freedom and the struggle for the rights of others, but this attempt at violent censorship was not then the legal norm. The freedom of speech established by the First Amendment applied to white men, and no one wanted to break the law in broad daylight. To correct these errors, there was always the mafia, paramilitarism, and, later, the secret agencies that operate beyond the law—when not legal harassment under other pretexts, also known as *lawfare*.

In its first article, Garrison already revealed the tone of a dispute that was shaping up to be a long-standing one: "*I am aware that many object to the severity of my language; but is there not cause for severity? I will be as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice. On this subject, I do not wish to think, or speak, or write with moderation. No! Tell a man whose house is on fire to give a moderate alarm, to moderately rescue his wife from the hands of the rapist, to gradually save his child from the fire…*"[146]

The Liberator, exercising its right to freedom of the press, began sending copies to the southern states. The response of the southern governments and slaveholders was not to ban the publication, as it was against the law—a law that was made so that some white and wealthy men could protect themselves from other white and wealthy men who never imagined that this freedom could in any way threaten the political power of all white and wealthy men.

Instead of breaking the law, an old method was resorted to. There's no need to break the rules when you can change them. That's how democracy works. Of course, not everyone had, or has, the same ability to perform such a democratic miracle. Those who cannot change the laws often break them, and that's why they are criminals. Those who can change them are the first to ensure they are followed. Except when the urgency of their own interests doesn't allow for bureaucratic delays or, for some reason, an inconvenient majority has been established, which those in power accuse of being irresponsible, childish, or dangerous.

Initially, since the First Amendment couldn't be directly abolished, the losses were minimized. North Carolina passed laws prohibiting the literacy of slaves.[lxiv] The prohibitions continued and spread throughout the 1830s to other slave states, almost always justified by the disorders, protests, and even violent uprisings that abolitionists had incited among Black people with subversive literature.

Slave propaganda didn't take long to appear, and posters and pamphlets were distributed warning of *subversive elements* among the decent people of the South and the dangers of the few lectures on the taboo subject. The harassment of free speech, without outright prohibition, also occurred in the major cities of the North. One pro-slavery pamphlet dated February 27, 1837 (a year after Texas was wrested from Mexico to reestablish slavery) invited the public to gather in front of a church on Cannon Street in New York, where an abolitionist was scheduled to give a talk at seven in the evening. The announcement called to "*silence this diabolical and fanatical instrument; let us defend the rights of the States and the constitution of the country*."[147]

The abolitionist publications and lectures did not stop. For a time, the way to counter them was not by banning free speech but by increasing slave propaganda and demonizing anti-slavery advocates as dangerous subversives. Later, when propaganda was no longer enough, all the Southern states began to adopt laws limiting the freedom of expression of revisionist ideas. Only when free speech (the freedom of dissenting whites) got out of control did they resort to more aggressive laws, this time limiting free speech with selective prohibitions or taxes on abolitionists. For example, in 1837, Missouri banned publications that went against the dominant discourse, that is, against slavery. It was rare to go as far as imprisoning dissenters. They were discredited, censored, or lynched under some good reason like self-defense or the defense of God, civilization, and freedom.

After the Civil War broke out, the slave-holding South wrote its own constitution. As the Anglo-Saxon Texans had done just after separating from Mexico and for the same reasons, the Confederate constitution

[lxiv] The laws did not explicitly prohibit slaves from learning to read and write. They prohibited those who knew how to do so from teaching slaves to read and write. In the same way, today there are no laws that prohibit anyone's education—quite the opposite. But various policies make education inaccessible to those who, for example, cannot afford it, while simultaneously promoting the commerce of entertainment, of distraction, that is, the opposite of education.

established the protection of the "peculiar institution" (slavery) while including a clause in favor of free speech. This clause did not prevent laws that limited it on one side, nor did it stop the paramilitarism of slave militias (the origin of the Southern police) from acting as they pleased. As in the "*We the people*" of the Declaration of Independence of 1776, as originally in the First Amendment of 1791, this "freedom of speech" did not include people who were neither "*the people*" nor complete and responsible humans. It referred to the free race. In fact, the constitution of the new slave-holding country stated, in its 12th clause, almost as a copy of the original 1791 amendment: "*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances*."[148] More just, equitable, and democratic, impossible… The secret was that, once again, as almost a century before, that "*the people*" did not include the majority of the population. If anyone had pointed this out at the time, they would have been accused of being crazy, unpatriotic, or a dangerous subversive. In other words, something that, at its core, hasn't changed much in the 21st century.[lxv]

By the time the slave system was outlawed in 1865, thanks to the circumstances of a war that was nearly lost, *The Liberator* had already published 1,820 issues. In addition to supporting the abolitionist cause, it also backed the movement for women's equal rights. The first female presidential candidate (though not legally recognized), Victoria Woodhull, was arrested days before the 1872 election on charges of publishing an article deemed obscene—opinions against *public decency*, such as women's right to make decisions about their sexuality. As has been the norm for centuries in the Free World, Woodhull was not arrested for exercising her freedom of speech but under the pretext of violating other laws.

However, this is not an exclusive characteristic of the slaveholding South or the United States as a whole. The British Empire always proceeded in the same manner, not much different from "Athenian

[lxv] This interpretation was etched in stone by the very constitution of 1861, which, while consolidating the right to slavery, sought to eradicate the bad example of "freed blacks" who could be introduced from the North and who, to a large extent, were *exported* to Haiti and Africa, where they founded Liberia. Section 9 stated: "*The importation of Negroes of African race from any foreign country other than the slave States or Territories of the United States of America is prohibited; Congress is obligated to pass laws effectively preventing this possibility*".

democracy" twenty-five centuries ago: "We are civilized because we tolerate different opinions and protect diversity and freedom of speech." Of course, as long as they do not cross certain boundaries. As long as they do not become a real threat to our unchallenged power.

In this sense, let us recall just one example so as not to turn this book into a voluminously impossible and unpublishable experience. In 1902, the economist John Atkinson Hobson published his now-classic *Imperialism: A Study*, where he explained the vampiric nature of Britain over its colonies. Hobson was marginalized by critics, discredited by academia and the mainstream press of the time. He was not arrested or imprisoned. While the empire he denounced continued to kill millions of human beings in Asia and Africa, neither the government nor the British crown bothered to directly censor the economist. Not a few, as happens today, pointed to him as an example of the virtues of British democracy. Something similar to what happens today with those who criticize American imperialism, especially if they live in the United States: "Look, they criticize the country they live in; if they lived in Cuba, they wouldn't be able to criticize the government." In other words, if someone points out the crimes against humanity in the multiple imperial wars and does so in the country that allows freedom of expression, that is proof of the democratic virtues of the country that massacres millions of people and tolerates someone daring to mention it.

How can all these apparent contradictions be explained? It's not that complicated. An imperial, dominant power, unchallenged and unafraid of the real loss of its privileges, does not need direct censorship. In fact, the acceptance of marginal criticism would prove its virtues. It is tolerated, as long as it does not cross the line of true questioning. As long as the hegemonic dominance is not in decline and in danger of being replaced by something else.

Now let's look at these counterexamples of hegemonic power and its stewards. Why don't you go to Cuba where people don't have freedom of expression, where there is no plurality of political parties?

To begin with, it would be necessary to point out that all political systems are exclusionary, albeit to different degrees. In Cuba, they do not allow liberal parties to participate in their elections, which are dismissed as a farce by liberal democracies. In countries with liberal democratic systems, such as the United States, the elections are essentially elections of a single party called the Democrat-Republican Party. There is no possibility

of a third party seriously challenging the Single Party because it is the party of the corporations, which are the elite that holds the real power in the country. On the other hand, if, for example, in a country like Uruguay, a Marxist like José Mujica wins the elections, or in Chile, another Marxist like Gabriel Boric wins, no sensible person would even imagine that those presidents would step outside the constitutional framework to turn those countries into Soviet-style systems prohibited by the constitutions of those countries. The same happens in Cuba, but it is always said that it is not the same.

Now, let's return to the logic of freedom of expression in different global power systems. To summarize, I think it is necessary to consider that freedom of expression is a luxury that, historically, colonies or republics fighting for independence from the freedom of empires have not been able to afford. It would suffice to recall the example of Guatemalan democracy, destroyed by the Great Democracy of the United States in 1954 because its government, democratically elected, decided to apply the sovereign laws of its own country, which did not suit the megacorporation United Fruit Company. The Great Democracy did not hesitate to install another dictatorship, one that left hundreds of thousands dead over the course of decades. The same story in Iran, Chile, Congo, Indonesia, Burkina Faso… and this is just limiting ourselves to the Cold War.

What was the *main problem* of Guatemala's democracy in the 1950s? It was its freedom of the press, its freedom of expression. Because of this, the empire of the North and the UFCo managed to manipulate public opinion in that country through a deliberately planned propaganda campaign, acknowledged by its own perpetrators—not by their local lackeys, it goes without saying.

When this happened, the young Argentine doctor, Ernesto Guevara, was in Guatemala and was forced to flee into exile in Mexico, where he met other exiles, the Cubans Fidel and Raúl Castro. When the Cuban Revolution triumphed, Ernesto Guevara, by then known as Che, summed it up remarkably: "Cuba will not be another Guatemala." What did he mean by this? Cuba would not allow itself to be inoculated like Guatemala through the "free press." History proved him right: When in 1961 Washington invaded Cuba based on the CIA's plan that assured "Cuba will be another Guatemala," it failed spectacularly. Why? Because its population did not join the "liberating invasion," as it could not be inoculated by the massive propaganda allowed by the "free press." Kennedy knew this and

reprimanded the CIA, which threatened to dissolve and ultimately was dissolved.

Freedom of expression belongs to those systems that cannot be threatened by freedom of expression, but rather the opposite: when popular opinion has been crystallized, either by tradition or by massive propaganda, the opinion of the majority is the best form of legitimization. This is why these systems, always dominant, always imperial, do not grant their colonies the same rights they grant to their own citizens.

When the United States was in its infancy and fighting for its survival, its government did not hesitate to pass a law that prohibited any criticism of the government under the pretext of spreading false ideas and information—seven years after passing the famous First Amendment, which did not arise from religious tradition but from the anti-religious European Enlightenment. Naturally, that law of 1798 was called the *Sedition Act*.

These tactics of the champion of freedom of expression were repeated at other times throughout its history, always when the decisions and interests of a government dominated by the corporations of the moment felt seriously threatened. This was the case with another law also called the *Sedition Act*, the one from 1918, when there was popular resistance against the propaganda organized by figures like Edward Bernays in favor of intervening in World War I—and thus ensuring the collection of European debts. Until just a few years earlier, the harsh anti-imperialist critiques of writers and activists like Mark Twain had been demonized, but there was no need to tarnish the reputation of a *free society* by imprisoning a renowned intellectual, as they had done in 1846 with David Thoreau for his criticism of the aggression and dispossession of Mexico to expand slavery, under the perfect excuse of not paying taxes. Neither Twain nor the majority of public critics managed to change any policies or reverse any imperialist aggression in the West, as they were read by a minority outside the economic and financial power structure. In that regard, modern propaganda had no competition, so direct censorship of these critics would have hindered their efforts to sell aggression in the name of freedom and democracy. On the contrary, the critics served to support that idea, by which the largest and most brutal empires of the Modern Era were proud democracies, not discredited dictatorships.

Only when public opinion began to doubt too much, as during the Cold War, did McCarthyism emerge with its direct persecutions and

later the (indirect) assassination of civil rights leaders and the violent repression with prisoners and deaths on campuses when criticism of the Vietnam War threatened to translate into effective political change—in fact, the Congress of the 1970s was the most progressive in history, making possible the Pike-Church Commission's investigation into the CIA's regime of assassinations and propaganda. When two decades later the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq occurred, criticism and public protests had become inconsequential and self-satisfied, but the new magnitude of imperial aggression starting in 2001 made it necessary to take new legal measures, as in 1798.

History rhymed again in 2003, only this time instead of the *Sedition Act* it was called the *Patriot Act*, and it didn't just establish direct censorship but something far worse: the indirect and often invisible censorship of self-censorship. More recently, when criticism of racism, patriotic history, and the excessive rights granted to sexual minorities began to spread beyond control, the recourse of legal prohibition returned. This is the case with the latest laws in Florida, promoted by Governor Ron DeSantis, which directly ban revisionist books and regulate language in public schools and universities—just to start. The creation of a demon called *woke* to replace the loss of the previous demon called *Muslims*.

Meanwhile, the stewards, especially the colonial lackeys, continue repeating clichés created generations ago: "*how can you live in the United States and criticize that country, you should move to Cuba, where freedom of expression isn't respected*." After their clichés, they feel so happy and so patriotic that it's almost pitiful to disturb them with reality.

On May 5, 2023, the coronation ceremony of King Charles III of England took place. Journalist Julian Assange, imprisoned for over a decade for the crime of publishing a small portion of the atrocities committed by Washington in Iraq, wrote a letter to the new king inviting him to visit the depressing prison of Belmarsh, in London, where hundreds of prisoners are suffering, some of whom were recognized dissidents. Assange was generously granted the sacred right to freedom of expression by the Free World. His letter was published by various Western media outlets, proving the virtues of the West and the childish contradictions of those who criticize the Free World from within the Free World. But Assange continues to serve as an example of lynching. Even during slavery, a few Black people were publicly lynched. The idea was to set an example of what could

happen in a truly free society, not to destroy the oppressive order by eliminating all the enslaved.

Manifest Destiny

IN THE JULY 1845 ISSUE of the *Democratic Review,* the editor and assistant to President James Polk, John O'Sullivan, invented the idea and the name of *Manifest Destiny*, which would go viral among those seeking a higher justification for their president's excuses to go to war with a country that didn't want it. Even though the reason for Texas's independence and the annexation of other territories was to turn them into slave states, O'Sullivan added the ever-necessary religious seasoning: "*Manifest Destiny carries the great experiment of liberty and must spread over all the land Providence has given us*." For centuries to come, theologians will search for the deed of cession sent by God to the American politician and journalist. Independent researchers will fail in their attempts to explain the expansion of slavery as a "great experiment of liberty" that "must spread over all the land."

In 1852, the same O'Sullivan, by then editor of the *New York Morning News*, published an article titled "The Cuban Debate" in the *Democratic Review* with an opinion reasonable for his time: "*this continent and its adjacent islands belong to the white man; the Black man must remain enslaved*..." The idea and the words would be repeated across the United States for generations to come, even after the legal abolition of slavery in 1865.

In May 1858, the *United States Democratic Review* of New York, in its article "The Destiny of Mexico," explained God's reasons for giving the rest of that horrible country to the Americans: "*Many countries accuse us of insisting too much on this Manifest Destiny… We feel the hand of God upon us… Mexico began its history with everything in its favor, except one: its people were not white… They had a bad mix of Spanish, Indigenous, and Black blood. People of this kind do not know how to be free and never will until they are educated by American Democracy, through which the master will rule over them… We are not taking Mexico for our own interest, which would be a joke too absurd to believe. No, we are taking Mexico for their own benefit, to help the eight million poor Mexicans who suffer under despotism, anarchy, and barbarism*."

In 1872, the artist John Gast will present to the public and to history the most famous piece of Kitsch art: his allegory "*American Progress*" (known as "The Spirit of the Frontier") will become a visual anthem in which a sensual blonde woman, with one breast nearly exposed, points the way to American pioneers carrying the plow, the telegraph, and the railroad across lands that beasts and savages are abandoning, frightened by progress and incapable of understanding true freedom. In the middle and beneath the sensual woman who flies like an angel, pioneers with their rifles stand ready to defend against any invader.

In 1897, the future president Theodore Roosevelt will write in "On *National Life and Character*" that "*the democracy of this century needs no further justification for its existence than the simple fact that it has been organized so that the white race may keep the best lands of the New World*."

In 2020, President Donald Trump will use the same theory in his State of the Union address, and the same NASA administrator will explain it on February 4th, in case the president and O'Sullivan hadn't been clear enough: "*Manifest Destiny was the belief that the United States was destined to promote democracy and free enterprise in North America. Tonight, President Trump has said in his State of the Union: 'The manifest destiny of the United States is in the stars.' We will go to the Moon and then to Mars to share those same values with all of humanity*."

The political war and the cultural war

ON JUNE 4, 1846, the *Sangamo Journal* of Springfield, Illinois, insisted that the hostilities were not initiated by Mexico but by President James Polk. However, as the war progresses, the same Illinois newspaper patriotically supports the attack and plunder of the southern neighbor. The days of the Whig Party are numbered. Just as the Federalist Party disappeared for opposing the war in 1812, now the Whigs will disappear for opposing the war with Mexico.

After the repeated military disasters in the attempt to annex part of Canada thirty years earlier, the smarter business is to continue the dispossession of Indigenous nations first and Mexican territories later. President James Polk has a good argument: "*To obtain California, the full power of Christendom must be applied*." A new crusade, another with the cross but

without the crucified. Great works require sacrifice and courage, like his abandonment of atheism upon entering the White House. The Democratic newspaper *State Register* clarifies and warns against excessive optimism: "*Mexicans are racially inferior, but they are one step above Blacks*."

Theories and faith are not enough. Popular morale must be lifted, and at a certain point, despite the self-censorship of most newspapers, the news that makes it into print has the opposite effect. Some newspapers begin publishing reports from their correspondents in Mexico along with letters from soldiers, as will happen in other invasions over the generations to come. Illinois congressman and volunteer soldier John J. Hardin is surprised not to have seen a single drunk Mexican. "*In other respects, they are not much different from Blacks,*" he writes, lamenting that he had expected to find gardens with beautiful women fanning themselves, "*offering the delicious fruits of the land*" and, instead, they had to march for long days across deserts filled with cacti. Worse than all that, Hardin couldn't stand encountering Mexican hybrids who were indifferent to the war. Others, like the young paramedic Alexander Somerville Wotherspoon, are annoyed when, instead of fierce natives, they encounter rather friendly people.

In the civilized North, readers, from the commissioner to the prisoners, eagerly await the newspapers every morning or read them aloud in the streets, as if it were the final of a great tournament. When they can't fill the pages with heroic tales of soldiers and volunteers, the editors amuse themselves by turning any fallen Protestant family son into a hero, like the unfortunate son of Senator Martin D. Hardin, John, who died in Buena Vista, Coahuila, on February 23, 1847. In Illinois, his funeral will gather 15,000 men and women who will mourn him. Even the young Abraham Lincoln, defeated in the 1844 elections by John Hardin, changes his antiwar rhetoric to praise his political adversary and those who fell in the war against Mexico. He spares no patriotic speeches or praises for the fallen hero. Historians will not agree on what John Hardin's military contribution might have been, but Lincoln will be elected that same year to take his seat in the House of Representatives.

On July 24, Henry David Thoreau, the most important philosopher and activist of 19th-century America, is arrested and spends a month in jail for refusing to support the war against Mexico with his taxes. In his defense, he says it is "*a war perpetrated by a few for their own benefit and at the expense of the government of all… A war carried out with the purpose of extending slavery into foreign territories*." In his book *Civil Disobedience*, he

will insist that no individual should surrender their conscience to their government or to the powers that rule their society. Ralph Waldo Emerson, James Russell Lowell (author of the anti-war book *The Biglow Papers*), and Frederick Douglass also do not hold back in their articles against the war. But one is a philosopher, the other a poet (like Thoreau, who, to make matters worse, is both), and the last is Black.

The political war will be won by power, this time the power of the slaveholding states of the South, but the cultural war threatens once again to be won by the radicals of the books. James Polk hurries and writes letters that his wife Sarah will read and correct before sending them to one of the president's few journalist friends.

Sarah pauses. She stands up and looks out the window. It is a sweltering summer day, and outside it must be unbearable. Even more so in the sun, like the Black workers toiling in the White House gardens. Sarah fans herself and reflects aloud:

"Those who wrote the Declaration of Independence lived in a world of fantasy…"

The president looks up and gazes at her. Another one of his dear Sarah's musings. James Polk smiles, and Sarah notices. She turns and looks at him with indifference. Polk, like his father, is a faithful Jeffersonian, an atheist, or nearly so, and still a believer in those things of humanism and some other failed French ideas about equality, liberty, and democracy. But more than in Jefferson's words, Polk trusts in the political pragmatism of his wife. She calls it instinct, because it is more fitting for a woman, and without stopping, she recites from memory in a sarcastic tone:

"*We, the people, hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness*."

James Polk shrugs and signs the solemn declaration, as in the Middle Ages when priests ended a debate by quoting Aristotle:

"Thomas Jefferson. July 4, 1776."

But Sarah is not impressed.

"Look at those men," she says, pointing to the Black men bent over the ground under the worst July sun. "They did not choose to be there, bent over all day to preserve the beauty of this house and this country. Nor did we choose to be here, you writing and me fanning myself while I watch those men under the sun. Each of us was created to occupy the place we occupy. Each one occupies the place they must."

On June 5, 1845, the *New York Herald* repeats a common belief: Mexicans are a race resulting from all kinds of mixtures, which has produced "*an intellectual imbecility characteristic of their race… making them incapable of governing themselves*." In contrast, "*the Anglo-Saxon race has always abhorred the very idea of mixing with other races… Wherever the Anglo-Saxons have advanced, they have displaced the inferior races, replacing barbarism with civilization*." Any peace treaty with Mexico "*must guarantee the protection of immigration from the United States to gradually displace the imbecilic race that inhabits that country with the energetic Anglo-Saxon race*."

In Congress, claims about the imbecility of non-Anglo-Saxon races and the incapacity of Mexicans, like Indians and Blacks, to understand the concept of freedom multiply. Starting with Andrew Jackson, the country's politicians and presidents are, in critical numbers, Southerners; far more religious than the founding generation and less educated in the culture of the Enlightenment and humanism. In the slaveholding South, sincerity emerges from the back. When dealing with inferior races or unpleasant individuals, they are kinder than in the North; they smile more easily and, trained in the culture of the Master, they know how to avoid conflict when unnecessary and when to provoke it when the fruit is ripe.

The racist and slaveholding mentality that governs the country will govern the world. For the Southerners of the North, the white race (almost nonexistent in the Bible, except for some pagans of the Roman Empire) was chosen by God to dominate the world. Christianity, like the human race, upon passing through Europe, would have lost its color and its converts, from being barbarians and Slavic slaves they became civilized slaveholders; from being persecuted and tortured by the Empire, they became fearsome persecutors and torturers of other defenseless peoples. For the new generations of Southern, slaveholding politicians, the rest of humanity (Black slaves, rebellious Indians, corrupt Mexicans) must be treated as what they are, inferior beings incapable of managing their own affairs. If they do not behave as subjects or slaves, they are considered guilty of some unacceptable offense and deserving of the punishment that extends borders and the sacred right of one's own commerce.

On August 8, President James Polk requests two million dollars from Congress to negotiate with a shattered, occupied Mexico with no possibility of negotiation. David Wilmot, a representative from Pennsylvania (the black sheep of the Democratic Party and later of the new Republican Party) proposes that, in exchange for the approval of the

requested funds, the prohibition of slavery in the new territories wrested from Mexico be maintained. The Senate, with a majority of Southern slaveholding Democrats, rejects the proposal. Texas and the new states will not only be an inexhaustible source of land to expand slave plantations but will ultimately break the balance in Congress between states in favor of and against slavery, which still threaten to abolish slavery in the United States, as the barbaric republics of the South had done decades earlier.

In February of the following year, Wilmot's proposal will be considered once again. Once more, as it will happen for ten generations to come, the bill will pass the House of Representatives and be rejected by the Senate, dominated by rural, conservative, and practically uninhabited states.[2] Slavery will still take a few more decades to be abolished, but it will require the bloodiest war the United States will suffer within its borders in its entire history. Blacks will become U.S. citizens in 1868, but not free individuals. Mexican Americans will not either. The electoral system for choosing presidents, the disproportionate power of conservative senators, a legacy of the slaveholding system since the founding of this country, will survive intact into the 21st century. The legal discrimination of Natives, Blacks, and Hispanics in the Southern states will last another century. Discrimination, racism, Anglo-Saxon self-victimization across the country, invasions, and interventions in foreign countries in the name of self-defense, at least another century.

19th Century Photojournalism

A FRIGID DAY IN LATE 1890, THE SOLDIERS in green entered the Indian reservation at *Wounded Knee, South Dakota*, with orders to disarm them all. One of them, the deaf Black Coyote, did not understand the order, but not because he was deaf. He did not understand why he had to surrender his rifle if he had paid a fortune for it. Wasn't it the whites who taught them about private property? When the deaf Black Coyote tried to explain why not with gestures, the civilized soldiers, frightened by the drums or reacting as the forces of order in the civilized world react to a refusal, began to shoot. The few Indians who had not yet been disarmed returned fire, but within minutes the camp was reduced to corpses staining the snow red in

the relentless Dakota winter. Three hundred Lakota men, children, and women, along with twenty-five soldiers, lay lifeless in the eternal cold. Big Foot lies sprawled, but he doesn't appear dead because his motionless hands are still speaking. A young man from the North Western Photo Co. approaches and takes his photograph. The Indians are buried in a mass grave, clothed or naked, and from then on the massacre is called the "Battle of Wounded Knee."

After the death of his father, Big Foot (also known as Spotted Elk) had taken charge of the Minneconjou tribe. Like other tribes, they were all suspected of rebelling against the continued invasion of Anglo-Saxon settlers into the few reservations that had been left to them by law—by the Anglo-Saxon law that the cornered peoples had accepted. The day before, they had been heading toward the banks of Wounded Knee Creek to join other Sioux tribes when Major Samuel Whitside ambushed them and marched them nearly twenty kilometers to Wounded Knee Creek, where other Indians were waiting. A few hours later, Colonel James Forsyth joined them with a battalion and four cannons.

Although it is another devastating massacre for the Lakota tribe, it still seems small from the perspective of the tragic history of the original nations. Nor is it the first time that Anglo-Americans, so proud of their adherence to the law, ignore a law or treaty with another nation when it doesn't suit them. The frequent changes in governments legitimized the fragility of these treaties with nations considered inferior. More than a hundred years earlier, the populous Native peoples west of the Appalachian Mountains were considered nations and were inhabited by as many souls as the populous nations of the Kingdom of Great Britain. In 1763, the British Empire had signed a treaty with the Indigenous Nations (*Royal Proclamation*) by which the whites could keep the territories to the East, as long as they did not cross the new border to the West.

The glorious American Revolution of 1776 changed everything. For the intellectuals called the Founding Fathers, it was a matter of principles and new ideas, like that beautiful notion that *all humans are born equal*, without clarifying that people are born equal as long as they are not Indians, Blacks, or mixed-race. For the less sophisticated portion of the Anglo-Saxon population who did not read French, the Revolution was a much more practical matter. It was about the right to cross the unjust border of the invading Indians and take more and more land in the name of some reason, some heroic history, or some biblical mandate. By 1780, the

Anglo-Saxon settlers, suddenly called *Americans* (a name until then reserved for the savage indigenous peoples and the corrupt inhabitants of Hispanic America), had decided that they had the *Right to explore* and, freed from the British yoke, could cross the border with axe and shotgun. Or rather, they decided to move it further West and defend themselves against the new savage invaders who wanted to stay on their own land. By 1830, the so-called *Indian Nations* had changed their name and, by the magic of linguistics and the force of gunpowder, had become simple savage tribes.[1] In the 1820s, President John Quincy Adams had been the last president to defend the successive treaties with the Indian peoples, until everything was resolved with the election of Andrew Jackson in 1828, a nearly illiterate soldier, celebrated in the slaveholding states of the South for his civilizing cruelty. In 1824, Thomas Jefferson had described the man who would define the primitive, anti-intellectual, and messianic spirit of the United States in the centuries to come: "*he is the least prepared man I have ever known in my life, with no respect for any law or the constitution*." Starting in 1829, the poor whites rebelled against the Black slaves and their absurd claims of equality. Anyone could see that there was an obvious difference between a white and a Black person. This *rebellion* of the poor whites would repeat itself almost two hundred years later and would lead to the presidency of Donald Trump, defined by many with the same words Jefferson had used to define Jackson. Not by chance, the same Republican president, as soon as he set foot in the White House, would hang a portrait of the founder of the Democratic Party, Andrew Jackson, in the most visible place in his office and consider him a historical model to follow.

Once elected president by a small white minority that identified with him, Jackson, known by the nickname "Indian Killer," ignored the treaties of the United States with the Native Nations. In 1830, he secured the passage of the *Indian Removal Act*, and Washington declared null and void all Indian land titles west of the Mississippi River. Jackson put the new territories up for sale at rock-bottom prices to favor "the true friends of liberty," the white settlers. On August 5, 1830, in a letter to John Pitchlynn (a Scotsman adopted as a child by the Choctaw tribe), an emotional Andrew Jackson wrote: "I am conscious of having fulfilled my duty to my red-skinned children." Thanks to the true friends of liberty, not only were the Indians stripped of their titles and lands, as was later done with the Mexicans, but the enslavement of Black people was extended further west

and continued to expand with the independence of Texas and the annexation of Mexican states up to California.

Stripped of the remaining lands they had south of Georgia and west of the Mississippi, the native populations were forced to evacuate vast areas of territory. Naturally, many resisted and were killed in the name of Christianity and civilization. Those who did not resist were exiled or died of hunger and disease during the removal to other lands, thousands of miles to the west. Shortly after, in 1835, some Cherokee delegates, without the approval of either the Cherokee Council or the Cherokee people, were forced to sign a treaty by which they graciously ceded more land to the civilized men in exchange for a corner of Oklahoma, which resulted in a new forced removal of hundreds of thousands of Indians from various states and the death of thousands who did not survive the journey into exile.[2] This treaty, too, will be ignored a few decades later by the white man, as he has done every time he deemed it convenient. Each of these violations of treaties with other peoples, well into the 21st century, will be called "the expansion of freedom and the right of the land of laws."

The tradition of "The Land of Laws" breaking laws and treaties with the Indians when it suits them had extended to other nations, from the Adams-Onís Treaty that set the border limits with Spanish territories in 1819 (later ratified with Mexico in 1828), to when in the 1830s Anglo settlers received land gifts from the Mexican government in Texas and, in gratitude, decided to ignore the laws of that country to later seize all of Texas and expand slavery freely, to the treaty to limit nuclear weapons with Iran in 2015.

After the bloody Civil War, Abraham Lincoln had posthumously achieved the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which declared that "all persons born in the national territory are citizens of the United States." Through this constitutional reform, Black people became citizens, albeit second-class. It would take longer for Indigenous people to prove they were born in the territories that had been stolen from them for over a couple of centuries. In 1924, the Native Americans, the *few remaining from the ethnic cleansing that would never be called ethnic cleansing, much less genocide, would be recognized as U.S. citizens.*

A few years after the Wounded Knee massacre, during his visit to South Dakota, the government commissioner for the Civil Service and future president, Theodore Roosevelt, would determine, and school texts would teach, that "the Indians were treated with great consideration and

justice." Thirty years later, not far from there, on Mount Rushmore, hammers would carve the sacred mountains of the Lakota to reveal the faces of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt. The sculptor, Gutzon Borglum, would not only suffer from narcissism and megalomania. The son of Danish immigrants, he would be another believer in the superiority of the white race and would oppose immigration. As a member of the Ku Klux Klan, he would secure funding from this group to sculpt Stone Mountain in Georgia, where the three defeated heroes of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, and Stonewall Jackson, still ride.

600 miles to the north, on May 20, 1948, what remained of the Arikara, Mandan, and Hidatsa nations would be forced to sign an agreement committing to sell their lands for the construction of the Garrison Dam. The nations, now reduced to tribes, had inhabited that region of North Dakota for a thousand years, and by then, they would have to resign themselves to evacuating the Missouri River strip, drown, lose everything through expropriation, or legitimize the dispossession for seven million dollars. Museums will preserve the photo in which the head of the Army Corps of Engineers calmly signs the new treaty. Beside him, standing, George Gillette, the chief of the tribes, hides his tears with one hand. Although reduced to a reservation, the three tribes had achieved some prosperity and complete self-sufficiency, which would end in that room of men in elegant suits, with several of their villages, their hospital, and their stores, submerged under the water of someone else's prosperity. Once again, as in previous treaties for the removal of indigenous peoples, like the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in Mexico, and as in many other instances, the "inferior races" would sign a treaty with a revolver to their heads and receive a sum of money to keep them from protesting. As in so many other cases, the victims would fulfill the treaty; the victors, only as long as it suited them.

When, at the end of the 18th century, between five and seven million indigenous people lived in North America, on the other side of the Appalachians, in the new nation of the thirteen colonies, three million lived, and the unpopulated distances required days and weeks of wagon travel to cross them. The vast expanse of territories taken by the Anglo-Americans was never enough for them. In May 1971, the celebrated actor John Wayne, the mythical hero of classic cowboy films, would justify the long and violent dispossession of Indian territories by stating: "*I don't think*

we did anything wrong by taking this great country from them… Our supposed theft was just a matter of survival. Our people needed new lands, and the Indians, selfishly, wanted to keep them for themselves."

Birth of Yellow Journalism

ON MARCH 7, 1894, THE CARTOONIST FREDERICK Burr Opper published in *Puck* the comic "*The fin de siècle newspaper proprietor*" in which he summarized, like in a pre-Renaissance composition, the complexity of the editorial world of the time. At the center appears a newspaper editor, likely an allusion to Joseph Pulitzer, one of the two most powerful at the time. In one corner, different readers rush hurriedly (a symbol of immediacy, urgency, and thoughtlessness) with newspapers bearing headlines like: "CHEAP SENSATION" and "FAKE NEWS."[149] That is, at the same time that "yellow journalism" and fake news were emerging, so was the awareness of their role, at least among critics.

On February 17, 1895, Joseph Pulitzer released a million copies of the *New York World* featuring a comic of a character named Mickey Dugan. On May 5, the homeless, barefoot, drunk, and foul-mouthed boy appeared dressed in a yellow robe in the first full-color comic strip the world had ever seen. Soon after, the lying boy moved, likely for money, to the *New York Journal*, owned by William Randolph Hearst.

But the *New York World* and the *New York Journal* dedicated more serious pages to politics and the coming war. The competition between the two was cutthroat, so they resorted to sensationalism and the fabrication of facts that inflamed primitive emotions like anger and patriotism. The *New York Press*, a modest city newspaper, derisively dubbed the persuasive work of the two major newspapers of the country as "yellow journalism."

Just three years later, on February 17, 1898, the *New York Journal* reported that the USS Maine had been sunk in Havana due to an attack by Spain. In one of its front-page headlines, it quoted the opinion of a friend of the house, Secretary Theodore Roosevelt, who did not believe, he said, that it had been an accident. The newspaper offered "*$50,000 in reward for anyone providing information leading to the capture of the criminals who killed 258 American marines*." The amount is equivalent to one and a half million

dollars in 2020 value. No major media outlet in the United States in 2020 would ever dare to offer so much. The public opinion, as so many times before, exploded in outrage and demanded a war to avenge such an offense. Obviously, the *New York Journal* saved those $50,000 while the newspapers sold like hotcakes.

The two giants of journalism who had just invented yellow journalism, the *New York Journal* of William Randolph Hearst and the *New York World* of Joseph Pulitzer, contradicted the survivors' accounts by claiming it had been a foreign attack. But, thanks to repetition, something remained as truth for future generations:

"REMEMBER THE MAINE! TO HELL WITH SPAIN!"

Remember the Maine! To Hell with Spain! We will never forget it. Songs were written, and postage stamps were issued with the command "*Remember the Maine*."

It didn't matter that Joseph Pulitzer, in private, admitted that "*not even the most lunatic could believe the Spaniards sank that ship*." Few were interested in a possibility that didn't sell. On February 17, the two newspapers competing for the nation's attention published a report from Captain Charles Sigsbee claiming the explosion was not an accident. Later, it would be revealed that the report had been fabricated. In fact, the leading explosives expert of the time, Navy officer Philip Rounsevile Alger, had concluded that the tragedy could only have been caused by an explosion in the combustion chamber, adjacent to the coal bunker: "*not even the most powerful torpedo known to modern military technology could have caused an explosion like the one that sank the Maine*", he wrote. A small newspaper, *The New York Times*, published that "*no one can be so stupid as to believe the Spaniards could have sunk the Maine*."

But reality is not what it is, but what half the people and businesses want it to be. Within weeks, the entire country had become familiar with the "*barbaric act*" against their marines. Hundreds of newspapers, like *The Nebraska State Journal* on April 10, did not hesitate for a moment about the "*criminal responsibility of Spain in the sinking of the Maine and the slaughter of its crew, something most people accept… That is a declaration of war*." The representative from Nebraska and later Secretary of State, William Jennings Bryan, a fierce rival of President McKinley and the powerful corporations in political power, succumbed to the old Anglo-American

passion: "*Humanity demands that we intervene*", he said. In times of war, almost everyone agrees. Especially when the one with a hammer sees every problem as a nail.

Two days earlier, President William McKinley had resisted declaring war against Spain. "*I have been in a war and I do not want to see bodies piled on top of each other again*", he had murmured in a meeting with friends. But the *Atlanta Constitution* mocked the president and labeled his hesitation as "*a display of American virility*." The solution of those who would not march to any war was the same as always. In one of its editorials, the newspaper stated: "*what we need is a man in the White House*." The same warmongering macho complex had haunted the future president Theodore Roosevelt ever since his father, a philanthropist and powerful businessman, had paid a substitute to replace his son in the Civil War.

On February 13, the same newspaper, under the front-page headline "*The Women of Atlanta Cry for an End to Spanish Harassment in Cuba*", claimed that "*the time has come when the voice of Humanity cries out for an intervention by the United States in the Pearl of the Antilles to put an end to Spain's atrocities against the children and women of that island… Their pleas are directed toward the republic that, in its finest moments of glory, must act with dignity and without selfishness, as the civilized nation it is*."

To help the president with a decision he didn't want to make, the *New York Journal* didn't hold back and began fueling rumors about his masculinity. On February 9, it published a leaked letter from Spain's representative in Washington, Enrique Dupuy de Lôme, in which the Valencian diplomat allegedly suggested McKinley's weak character. In exaggerated headlines, the newspaper that invented yellow journalism once again resorted to superlatives: "*The Greatest Insult in the History of the United States*." Shocked by the public exposure of his letter, worsened by poor translations, Dupuy de Lôme resigned from his post in Washington. The U.S. president demanded an apology from the Spanish government, which arrived immediately on February 14, one day before the famous explosion in Havana's harbor.

In Havana, the correspondents from New York newspapers hadn't found more significant news and focused on reporting some fights between Spaniards and Americans. In January, the *New York Journal,* eager to outsell its rival, had reported on an incident between drunk men as the greatest offense in the nation's history, going so far as to headline: "*Next to*

War With Spain" demanding the nation's honor be restored with a declaration of war "*within the next 48 hours*."

McKinley, the president who in his 1896 inauguration speech had assured that his policy would be based on "*non-intervention in the affairs of other governments*" and "*avoiding the temptation of territorial aggression*", as Woodrow Wilson would do two decades later, swallowed his words and on January 24 sent the USS Maine to Cuba under ambiguous reasons: certain rumors that the German navy might be sailing in the Caribbean, a sense of humanity for the oppressed people of Cuba…

In January, in a letter to Henry White, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge (promoter of Theodore Roosevelt in the new government and of the idea of the United States as a benevolent empire) wrote: "*any day there could be an explosion in Cuba*." Three weeks later, with no record of the slightest incident, on February 15, an explosion sank the USS Maine off Havana, killing 261 U.S. Marines. Only the captain (who at the moment of the explosion had just sealed an envelope with a letter to his wife), his officers, and a few others survived. Commander Francis W. Dickins reported an accident. Naval officer George Dewey confirmed it: *there has been an accident.* Naval Captain Philip R. Alger concluded that there had been an explosion caused by a sudden fire in the engine room, near the powder magazine.

Within hours, William Hearst, the most successful businessman in American journalism (former Democratic left-wing candidate for the House of Representatives and shortly before shifting to the conservative right), with one foot on his desk 2,300 kilometers from Havana, ordered his editor to announce the scoop that would ignite the patriotic hearts of every American and sell more newspapers than his eternal rival, József Pulitzer.

Before the last bullets were fired in Cuba and the Philippines, on May 2, William Hearst published an editorial in the *New York Journal* titled "*Victory! Complete! Glorious!*" where he declared, with the same fanaticism of past exploits: "*the truth is with us, and God is with the truth*." In other words, God was with the *New York Journal*, which that day sold one and a half million newspapers thanks to a war invented to sell newspapers.

As happened for generations after the Battle of the Alamo in 1836, when the press and taverns repeated "*Remember the Alamo!*", when headlines, high school textbooks, and songs by Jane Bowers made multiple generations weep as if it had been a foreign aggression, the virile nation that

remembers almost nothing says it is unwilling to forget and insists, once again: "*Remember the Maine!*."[lxvi]

The invention of *fake news* as a private business model and the war against Spain in Cuba became forever intertwined. Both enemies, Pulitzer and Hearst, were businessmen and knew that nothing sells better than war, misinformation, and the stoking of tavern patriotism. That year, the *New York Journal* had sold an impressive 30,000 copies per day. By the time the war against Spain broke out—which also wouldn't truly be a war—the *Journal* was selling over a million copies daily. By then, it had halved the price of the newspaper (to one cent) in an effort to attract "less sophisticated" readers. It also halved its commitment to facts and decency. Among the favorite stories that were later reproduced in hundreds of other local newspapers across the country, the most appealing were those that depicted the Spanish as barbaric criminals, depraved men pursuing defenseless, nearly naked Cuban women.

This war was not the first in which the media justified the ends, but it was the first in history to be encouraged and fueled by the media in pursuit of increased sales.

Since 1917, the most coveted journalism award in the country has borne the name of József Pulitzer, in honor of his fight against corruption and for journalistic excellence.

Psychological Warfare

IN ITS ARTICLE "THE SPYMASTER'S TOOLKIT," the CIA defended the manipulation of public opinion in an unparalleled way: "*propaganda campaigns use communication to alter the beliefs and viewpoints of a population in order to influence their behavior*." It then defines the three most well-known forms of propaganda in the Anglo-Saxon world, which have been applied for generations across the globe: white, black, and gray: "*white propaganda openly identifies its source and uses soft persuasion techniques and public*

[lxvi] The remains of the Maine were recovered in 1913. In 1974, the U.S. commission led by Admiral Hyman Rickover concluded that the true cause of the sinking was exactly what had been reported from the first day by its own crew: an explosion in the engine room. "We found no evidence of the explosion of any mine," the report adds. What is not up for debate is the lie perpetuated by the U.S. press, by politicians, and ultimately by an entire people who would soon forget the matter as a way of completing the tradition.

relations to achieve the desired result. For example, during the Persian Gulf War, the CIA dropped leaflets from the air before some allied bombings to give civilians time to evacuate and encourage military units to surrender. Black propaganda, on the other hand, is misinformation that is attributed to one side of a conflict but is actually produced by the opposing side, like Franklin sending a letter 'from' a German prince."

In the case of black propaganda, the CIA article could have cited any of the thousands of examples from its own history, rather than the lesser-known Franklin example. However, whether by mistake or out of habit, it gives greater prominence to 'gray propaganda.' "*Gray propaganda is the most mysterious of all because its source is never identified*."[150]

This definition is consistent with the CIA's own practices and even its architectural ornaments. The iconic sculpture at its Langley, Virginia headquarters, unveiled in 1990, is a undulating copper wall with nearly two thousand letters engraved in an order so mysterious that even its own agents and decoding experts struggle to decipher it. After years of failed attempts by a commission within the agency, the first of the four messages forming the enigma was decoded: "*Between the penumbra and the darkness lies illusion*." The penumbra, the chiaroscuro, the gray, the uncertainty—the eternal enigma that has occupied thousands for years as the primary form of concealment and distraction.

This gray is the gray established by the CIA's own manual, which, for decades, has demanded that everything done must be done "allowing for plausible deniability" and, under any circumstances, "one must never admit involvement in any act, even if all evidence points to the contrary."

The intelligence service that preceded the CIA was the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). One of its branches was called the Morale Operations Branch, responsible for psychological warfare through misinformation or journalistic manipulation. In one word: *propaganda*. Although initially part of the war to liberate Europe from its own Nazism, these techniques were later used to oppress other peoples of the so-called Third World in the expansion of Anglo-Saxon imperialism and, to a lesser extent, Soviet imperialism. Its creator (the soldier, diplomat, agent, failed politician, founder of the CIA, and recipient of colorful medals of honor at military galas) William Donovan was an admirer of Nazi propaganda techniques, which, in turn, had been developed from American propaganda techniques, as well as the ideology of white racial superiority. According to Donovan, "*when you strike the morale of a people or any army, you*

strike a decisive factor, because it is the strength of their will that determines the duration of wars, the measure of resistance."[151]

During World War II, Morale Operation managed to plant twenty false rumors per week in the local press. This practice left an invaluable experience in the refinement of public opinion manipulation. It was discovered, for example, that people were highly sensitive to short, concrete stories that could instill fear or distrust and that, moreover, had some connection to a famous figure. On the other hand, it was found that songs appealing to nostalgia for home and other positive feelings could also elicit significant and convenient reactions from soldiers on the front lines.

The Danger of Foreign Ideas

PLUTOCRACY DOMINATED THE ECONOMY AND POLITICS of the United States since the 19th century, before and during the post-Civil War period, which history books call "Reconstruction" for the wrong reasons. The most logical course would have been a period of *deconstruction* following the military defeat of the Confederacy in 1865.

There was no reconstruction of the post-war, post-slavery country, but rather a *reconstruction* of the ideology and culture of the loser, that is, the slaveholding ideology within a new legal system. Why is it assumed that a slaveholding mentality, entrenched for centuries in a culture, would end with a war and new laws? It is at least surprising that there are historians who could even imagine such a miracle.

The slave system was outlawed but became a legal system of discrimination, based on the Jim Crow laws promoted by the easily defensible principle of "state independence," that is, the exact same narrative that forty years earlier had driven Stephen Austin, "The Empresario," to make Texas an exception in a Mexico that insisted on outlawing slavery long before Anglo immigrants decided to enforce it by force.

After the Civil War, the masters became businessmen, and the black slaves became poor employees. Poverty and demonization later discriminated less based on skin color and more on social class. In the words of former President Rutherford Hayes in 1889, "The problem lies in the great wealth and power in the hands of a few unscrupulous men who control

capital. In the national Congress and state legislatures, hundreds of laws are passed dictated by the interests of these men and against the interests of the workers… This is not a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. It is a government of the corporations, by the corporations, and for the corporations […] Excessive wealth in the hands of a few means extreme poverty, ignorance, vice, and misery for the many… If the people were properly informed, if they could understand what the problem is, they would surely seek a solution… One solution would be, for example, to pass laws that regulate the power of corporations, their properties… the taxes they pay."152

This entire racist and classist culture and ideology, as we have explained in other books, inspired Nazism in Europe. Not only did Hitler acknowledge influences such as that of New Yorker Madison Grant in his 1916 book *The Passing of the Great Race*, but he also decorated the most prominent American businessmen, such as Henry Ford, the mogul of the press and popular film production William Randolph Hearst, the CEOs or owners of Texaco, DuPont, Standard Oil, General Motors (and Opel), IBM and ITT, J.P. Morgan, City Bank, General Electric, among others.

Long before World War II, like any major businessman, power figure, or interest group in the United States, the Dulles family had connections, interests, and sympathies with Adolf Hitler's Nazi regime. As early as the 1940s, brothers Allen and Foster Dulles were already working for Washington's intelligence services, with offices in the Rockefeller Center. The family was not only part of the Republican opposition to the "socialist Roosevelt" but also a prominent member of Wall Street's plutocracy. Not only did NASA develop by hiring over a thousand Nazi engineers from Hitler, but the CIA also had close ties with every Nazi criminal roaming free in Europe or trying to flee to the Americas.

In the backyard, the psychopathic dictators chosen by Washington to replace the marines who "restored order" in the black republics a few decades earlier began to extend their power within the United States. One of them, Rafael Trujillo, the *Creole marine*, the terror not only of Dominican dissidents, responsible for persecution and massacres against Haitians (Trujillo's mother was a Haitian mulatto), author of several assassination attempts against more independent presidents from the Caribbean pool, was one of the protégés of Washington and the major American companies. To Washington, he ensured the strategy of "the fight against communism" in a country where communists were almost nonexistent or

irrelevant, and illegal payments to politicians to moderate criticism of massacres like that of El Perejil. To the companies, he ensured access without limitations or leftist questioning. In 1955, Vice President Nixon, as was his custom of personally supporting friendly dictatorships, visited the island. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles described Trujillo as "*one of the most important anti-communist fighters in the hemisphere*." Nixon advised Eisenhower to continue supporting the Dominican dictatorship despite its flaws because "*the Spanish have many virtues, but governing is not among them*."[153] Like many other dictators friendly to Washington, Trujillo fulfilled the role of justifying the convenient narrative of the Cold War. The ruling elite of the southern republics dedicated themselves to exaggerating or inventing more and greater "communist threats" so that Washington's money would continue to flow, much of which ended up in the personal coffers of the well-to-do families in some developed and pristine bank in Europe. As happened and will happen in many other moments in history, Washington, which knew almost everything, pretended not to know and paid to be lied to. In addition to official aid, the CIA supplemented the channeling of money to the dictatorships secretly, sometimes with suitcases full of cash left in their hotel every time the dictator gave a speech at the UN.

Trujillo's regime not only practiced ethnic cleansing, massacres, torture, and disappearances. His most effective method, like that of any dictatorial or democratic regime, was the promotion of fear. Fear to the point of civil terror. Just as decades later the green Ford Falcons became the symbol of terror in the dictatorship of Rafael Videla in Argentina, decades earlier in the streets of Ciudad Trujillo it was the Volkswagens, the black beetles called *cepillos*, which "*created the idea that Trujillo was always watching*."[154] Any accusation or suspicion published by the dominant newspaper *El Caribe* was a death sentence or, at best, the ruin of any reputation.

In 1956, Professor Jesús de Galíndez, a Republican exile from Spain in the Dominican Republic, obtained a scholarship to pursue a doctorate while teaching in the Spanish literature department at Columbia University. His dissertation consisted of an extensive 750-page research on "The Trujillo Era." Furious at not being treated well by history, the dictator initially sent Dominican thugs to sit in his classes. Galíndez confessed to some students that Trujillo was after him, but at the time, his students thought the professor was paranoid or trying to gain importance with the

Caribbean dictator. Some of Trujillo's envoys offered Galíndez $25,000 for the manuscript. Galíndez refused, and shortly after, he disappeared from the university and New York. He was not the first critic of Trujillo to disappear in New York.

One night, after finishing one of his classes, Galíndez was heading to his small apartment on Fifth Avenue when he was kidnapped and taken in an ambulance to a small airport on Long Island and from there to Ciudad Trujillo, with a stop in Miami to refuel. He was immediately taken to Casa de Caoba, Trujillo's favorite residence, where they made him eat his manuscript. After being tortured, he was submerged in boiling water and finally fed to the sharks, Trujillo's preferred method of execution.

The young pilot hired for the transfer of the kidnapped man, Gerald Murphy, got drunk in the taverns of Ciudad Trujillo and began to talk too much. On one occasion, after recognizing Galíndez's photo in the press, he commented that he could get rich if the Dominican government wanted to keep him quiet. Trujillo, who saw and heard everything, decided that the drunk Yankee should also disappear, without the need to spend much. Frank himself took the pilot to the government palace for a promising meeting, and he was never seen alive again. His body was found on a cliff where the president's death squads used to dump their victims. The suspicion and later accusation against Frank opened the can of worms, which is why we know something about the case beyond the fabricated stories.

When the scandal of the kidnapping and execution reached the White House, false reports about the professor immediately surfaced, claiming that he "*suffered from a persecution complex*," that he had fled and had been seen in a South American country. The CIA itself circulated the false version that Galíndez had escaped with a million dollars from the CIA, which the agency had provided to support a movement against Franco in Spain. Another invented version, also by the CIA, claimed that the professor "*was a tool of the communists*." Like in a supermarket, there were false stories to choose from, but all of them aimed to tarnish the victim's reputation.

The kidnapping of Galíndez was an operation organized by a Washington-based company called *Robert A. Maheu & Associates* and led by John Frank, an agent collaborating with BOSS and Trujillo. The private firm had been founded by a former CIA agent and a former FBI agent to operate within U.S. territory where the CIA had no jurisdiction. The

operators involved in the crime were part of the investigation. Frank and Maheu worked with their contacts in the New York police, who were in charge of investigating the disappearance. The president of Columbia University himself, Grayson Kirk, was a friend of the Dulles brothers and a member of the boards of foundations that laundered CIA money for public opinion manipulation projects. According to David Talbot, "*years later, Maheu claimed that the television series Mission: Impossible was based on the actions of his team*."[155] Now, if we look at the story more broadly, it could be said that the series (we could add *The Magnificent Seven* and many other subsequent films and TV series) and Maheu's team itself were based on the tradition of 19th-century American filibusters, who were in turn the land-based version of English pirates that the Crown did not acknowledge but protected, as this illegal activity brought great economic and geopolitical benefits to their home country. A tradition that did not end with the later-forgotten scandal of the professor's death. Nor with the assassination of Kennedy in 1963, for which all the evidence and modus operandi almost unanimously point to CIA involvement. Among other similar cases is the well-known 1976 terrorist attack in Washington, which took the life of Allende's diplomat, Orlando Letelier, and his secretary, organized by Pinochet's Operation Condor and the Miami-based Cuban exile mafia, many of whom were considered terrorists by the FBI but protected by the CIA.

No one was convicted for the crimes of Professor Galíndez and the young pilot Murphy.

Like the CIA, though with fewer resources, the KGB had implemented its own informational and cultural war. According to David Talbot, both Trujillo and the CIA were obsessed with what Stalin had summarized in a few words: "*writers are the engineers of the human soul*" and "*the production of ideas is more important than the production of tanks*."[156] In a massive and multimillion-dollar cultural war, the CIA channeled enormous resources to promote some writers and sink others through events, reviews, literary awards, cultural magazines, and book promotions, especially through front organizations like the Congress for Cultural Freedom, "*the NATO of culture*," which from the 1950s became "*one of the greatest patrons of the arts in human history*."[157] The CIA's aesthetic commissar was James Jesus Angleton, and the official style was T.S. Eliot's Modernism. As Jason Epstein, director of Random House, acknowledged when referring to the CIA's contributions, "*who wouldn't want to be politically correct and,*

at the same time, be rewarded for it?." This convenient aesthetic was challenged by the Beat generation of Allen Ginsberg, who had strong suspicions about the CIA's intervention in culture. In "*Howl*" (1956), Ginsberg denounced "*the great stone of war… whose soul is electricity and banks*."

From influential literary critic, Angleton ended up working for the CIA as he himself defined it, "Postmaster," illegally opening letters and recording the rooms of any suspect, that is, almost everyone Angleton knew, and reporting to Dulles' office about his "*fishing activities*," as he called his electronic interventions, even to the point of spying on the CIA director himself, Allen Dulles, and recording personal secrets that prevented the powerful Dulles from firing him.[158] A strategy known and practiced by the CIA itself, the FBI, and very likely the NSA today: keeping personal files on someone's privacy to use them when necessary. This is why one of the greatest enemies of these powerful secret, investigative, and extortion agencies have been moral and cultural revolutions: how to extort politician X or leader Y with some embarrassing record if what was once shameful is now a source of pride? But the case of Allen Dulles had nothing to do with any bedroom stories. Angleton admitted it to journalist Joseph Trento, shortly before his death: "*Do you know how I became head of counterintelligence? I promised not to reveal information about Allen Dulles and 60 of his closest friends regarding their relationships with Adolf Hitler*."[159]

However, even some writers who benefited from free and massive promotion for saying something positive about the U.S. government ended up publishing criticisms not only of the government but of culture in general. This is why, I believe, we can speculate that one of the most active players in this cultural war for thirty years, Richard Nixon, back in the White House as president, in a National Security Council meeting on November 6, 1970, stated: "*I will never agree with the policy of reducing the power of the military in Latin America. They are centers of power subject to our influence. The others, the intellectuals, are not subject to our influence*."

The CIA and "fake news" during the Cold War

ON AUGUST 15, 1953, PRESIDENT Dwight Eisenhower signed the authorization for Operation *PBSuccess*, with which the CIA decided to overthrow the democratically elected president of Guatemala, Jacobo Árbenz, by

inventing the story of the communist threat. In the words of Theodore Roosevelt's grandson, Kermit Roosevelt Jr., who a year earlier had successfully participated in the overthrow of another democratically elected president, Mohamed Mossadegh, Guatemala was going to be *"another Iran*." In Guatemala, only four of the 61 elected congressmen were communists, and their influence in the army, as in any other Latin American army, was minimal. Not without irony, it was the communists who advised the president on the option of a capitalist reform, meaning that the lands to be expropriated would not go to the government but to Guatemalan farmers.

On December 3, 1953, the CIA approved a budget of three million dollars for this operation, to which it later added another four and a half million. That same month, shortly after the arrival of the new ambassador Peurifoy, the deputy chief of the U.S. embassy in Guatemala and surviving diplomat, William L. Krieg, completed his report stating that the reactionary and oligarchic forces are "*first-class vagabonds… parasites who only think about money*", while the communists "*work hard, have ideas, and are aware of the purpose of their work*", besides being "*honest and committed*." The tragedy, added Bill Krieg, is that "*the only people who are committed to hard work are those who, by definition, are our enemies*."

By a twist of fate, almost everyone involved in planning the coup against Árbenz was an investor in the United Fruit Company: Secretary of State John Foster Dulles; CIA Director Allen Dulles; Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs and brother of the former director of United Fruit Company, John Moors Cabot; Senator and UN Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge; President Eisenhower's secretary, Ann Whitman, wife of Edmund Whitman, the CIA's press director; and Walter Bedell Smith, Undersecretary of State, who would later join the board of directors of United Fruit Company.

The United Fruit Company's party in Guatemala had ended in 1944 when philosophy professor Juan José Arévalo and his "Spiritual Socialism," inspired by Franklin Roosevelt, won the country's first free elections.[lxvii] With the newfound democracy came a rare period of reforms that limited land giveaways and tax exemptions that had benefited The Octopus (UFCo) during the dictatorship of Jorge Ubico. Resorting to his classic method of making others say what he wanted the people to repeat, just as

[lxvii] In 2016, U.S. media expert Robert McChesney defined socialism as "*the extension of democracy into the realm of the economy*".

he had once placed a cigarette in the mouths of opera singers, the mercenary propagandist Edward Bernays put a banana in the hands of Hollywood stars and began the makeover of The Octopus. As always, Bernays' propaganda campaign was a resounding success.

It wasn't just about reducing production costs through subsidies and starvation wages. The ideology of business needed a psychology and an ethics to serve it. The near-total dependence of workers on companies like UFCo prevented the poor from retiring to their own lands, ceasing to be wage laborers and desperate consumers. Long before its massacres in Latin America, UFCo knew it had to inoculate its southern workers with a desire for material things. This was not a new idea, not at all. A century earlier, to decree the abolition of traditional slavery in their Caribbean possessions, the British had designed a form of slavery desired by the new slaves. On June 10, 1833, a member of Parliament, Rigby Watson, had put it in very clear terms: "*To make them work and create in them a taste for luxuries and comforts, they must first be taught, little by little, to desire those objects that can be attained through labor. There is a progression from the possession of necessities to the desire for luxuries; once these luxuries are attained, they will become necessities in all social classes. This is the kind of progress through which the Negroes must pass, and this is the kind of education to which they must be subjected*." UFCo took note and put it into practice. In 1929, its most promoted journalist (and friend of Henry Ford), Samuel Crowther, reported that in Central America, "*people work only when forced. They are not accustomed to it, because the land provides the little they need… But the desire for material things is something that must be cultivated... Our advertising has the same effect here as in the United States and is reaching the common people, because when a magazine is discarded here, people pick it up, and its advertising pages appear as decorations on the walls of thatched huts. I have seen the interiors of cabins completely covered with pages from American magazines... All of this is having its effect in awakening the desire for consumption in the people*." Samuel Crowther considered the Caribbean the lake of the American Empire, which protected and directed the destiny of its countries for the glory and development of all.

But development did not come; quite the opposite. Nor did the desire for material consumption arrive with the force that the desire for freedom and democracy did, which by then was sweeping Latin America and, at this point, had toppled several dictatorships. When Árbenz assumed the presidency, 70 percent of the population was illiterate, a figure

that rose to 90 percent among the indigenous population, meaning more than 60 percent of Guatemalans were subjected to forced labor with non-existent wages by tradition and a life expectancy of 38 years. Between UFCo and the Creole oligarchy, 2 percent of the population owned 72 percent of the land in a country whose economy was almost exclusively based on agriculture.

Just four months earlier, in March 1954, the powerful CIA agent David Atlee Phillips, still in Chile, had received a call for an urgent meeting in Miami. Phillips' new mission was to destabilize and force the president of Guatemala, Jacobo Árbenz, to step down. Decades later, in his 1977 memoirs, he would recall his own surprise at the request and his naive question:

"*But Árbenz is the president elected by the people of Guatemala in free elections. What right do we have to overthrow him?*"

Time and again, Phillips would demonstrate in his memoirs *The Night Watch* that he had a secret bank of invaluable information, but he didn't realize that he didn't understand how the Agency he worked for functioned; his knowledge had a ceiling, and his superiors didn't allow any of their agents to break through it. It didn't matter if Phillips had once seen the CIA director, Allen Dulles, in a brief meeting in Washington. Dulles applied the same method to those below him: *compartmentalizing information*, dividing knowledge so that any leak could be limited to a small area that would later prove inconsequential (like placing barriers in a domino setup to prevent the entire system from collapsing). Decades later, on June 31, 2016, the *Washington Post* would reveal how one of the methods used by the Agency, known as *Eyewash* (*Eye Wash*), involved lying to their own officials so that no one could ever be sure if something was true or false.

"*This operation could lead Guatemala into a bloody civil war,*" Phillips insisted. "*Many people could die...*"

"*That's true,*" replied agent Tracy Barnes, who would also participate in the failed Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba. "*That's why we'll try to do it in a way that avoids a massive bloodbath, if that's possible*."

The coup in Guatemala had been planned using the new strategies of propaganda and psychological warfare carried out through the press, which would serve as a model in other countries due to its high efficiency and low military cost. To carry it out, the U.S. government hired a

frequent collaborator in other manipulations, Sigmund Freud's nephew, Edward Bernays.

Phillips didn't know this. He also didn't know that the main reason wasn't a supposed communist threat, but rather that Árbenz had decided to fulfill his campaign promises to nationalize a small piece of Guatemalan land owned by the United Fruit Company. As was customary in other countries in the region, the banana company had received tax exemptions and land gifts from previous dictatorships, like that of Jorge Ubico, and neither the Company, the Agency, nor the U.S. government were willing to tolerate such defiance. As if this weren't reason enough, the top brass, from the CIA to the U.S. government, held shares in the UFCo. Its operational budget exceeded that of the banana republic governments that protected it with their armies and laws in its favor, laws passed by governments and parliaments, when they existed, under coercion or direct corruption, one based on the well-known "*bomber diplomacy*" and the other on the more recent "*dollar diplomacy*" (pressure from U.S. banks for countries to take on rescue loans and the subsequent sending of Marines to collect unpayable debts).

A year earlier, the CIA and British intelligence services, at the insistence of Queen Elizabeth II, had managed to overthrow the elected president of Iran, Mohammed Mossadeq, who had had the audacity to try to fulfill another campaign promise: the nationalization of his country's oil. The strategy of social destabilization through *freedom fighters* ("freedom fighters," used earlier to wrest Panama from Colombia half a century earlier and on other occasions like supporting the Contras in Nicaragua thirty years later) wasn't immediately known, and neither the Iranian people nor the people of Guatemala could be informed or prepared for this manipulation. As the dictator and friend of the Dominican Republic, Rafael Trujillo (Caligula, to his friends), liked to say, "*those who don't know how to deceive don't know how to govern*."

In Mexico City, David Phillips' boss, Howard Hunt, ordered him to infiltrate the Guatemalan embassy, located just two blocks from the U.S. embassy. The methods used were typical of the CIA: a month earlier, one of their agents had befriended the guard and studied his weaknesses. On the night the agents were to enter the foreign embassy, the "good friend" brought the guard a bottle of tequila and a deck of cards, which kept him occupied for several hours. During that time, the CIA agents managed to photograph all the documents they found in the safes, and

within hours the microfilms were on their way to Washington. The operation went unnoticed, but it was not the first harassment of Guatemala, nor of a disobedient government. In September 1952, then-President Truman had already ordered Operation PB-Fortune, which aimed to destabilize the new Árbenz government through coordination with Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza and General Castillo Armas.

Of course, there's always a black sheep. In Guatemala, the CIA chief, Birch O'Neil, had disagreed with the plan for a military coup in the country due to the dramatic long-term consequences it could have, which led Allen Dulles to remove him from his position immediately. That same month, in March 1954, Phillips recruited several Guatemalans whom he took to the cabarets of Miami, and shortly after, he created the clandestine radio station "Radio Liberación" on 6370 kHz shortwave, which pretended to broadcast from Guatemala. Every day, the announcers introduced themselves, with the Guatemalan national anthem playing in the background, as a heroic "*clandestine station of the Guatemalan Liberation Movement, from a secret location in the Republic… Between songs, we demonstrate the palpable crime of communist domination and the unstoppable force of our liberation crusade*." The CIA had decided to broadcast on shortwave due to its reach and because Guatemalans, even in the most remote rural areas, often listened to that frequency, especially at night. In just six weeks, the results were devastating. The uproar caused by Orson Welles' 1938 radio program in New York about an alien invasion is a mere footnote in comparison.

One day before *D-Day*, on June 18, Washington decided that Carlos Castillo Armas, the puppet colonel with the Hitler-style mustache, would enter Guatemala and stay near the border awaiting further orders. Pepe and Mario, the main announcers of Radio Liberación, had fun spreading fake news. They dedicated a program to a heroic Russian pilot who dared to flee to the West with his plane. Shortly after, a Guatemalan pilot did the same. Pepe and Mario's team managed to locate him and pressured him to record his adventure, but the pilot got scared because, he said, he had family in Guatemala. Properly advised by Phillips, Pepe and Mario invited him out one night with the best Scotch whisky and kept refilling his glass while a hidden recorder captured his tirades against the Jacobo Árbenz government, which were later broadcast without his consent on Radio Liberación. According to agent Howard Hunt, the pilot was Colonel Rodolfo Mendoza and had been recorded drunk by the CIA's

Latin agents in El Salvador. Hunt and Phillips would agree that his words had been aired without his consent. A detail. To prevent further incidents, President Árbenz suspended flights of his own air force and later resorted to cutting off electricity at night so potential invaders couldn't identify their targets. Radio Liberación invented that the liberator air force's bombs would fall on areas without light, so that night Guatemalans began lighting fires outside their homes while cursing the government.[lxviii]

The staging of *fake news* reached the major U.S. press. *Life* and the *New York Times* reported that the heroic radio station was broadcasting from the Guatemalan jungle while Pepe and Mario faked armed government attacks that supposedly left numerous dead and non-existent responses led by Colonel Castillo Armas, who, hidden and trembling a few kilometers from the border, was actually awaiting new orders with just 150 men.

In Guatemala, the opposition began accusing the Jacobo Árbenz government of operating the clandestine radio station to sow terror among the population. Some bombings are real. The rebels, who have pilots with little understanding, enter Guatemala in American planes from World War II and drop bombs anywhere in the capital. One of the bombs mistakenly destroys an evangelical radio station, opposed to the government, and another sinks a British ship loaded with coffee and cotton. Unfortunately, the ship had been insured by Lloyd's of London, which would file a lawsuit against the CIA for damages, leading Guatemala to end up paying nearly a million dollars (over nine million at 2020 value) to avoid the trial and a potential scandal.

President Árbenz, harassed and suffocated, sent a message to the U.S. embassy requesting a meeting with President Eisenhower to negotiate Guatemala's internal policies. Naturally, he never received a response. Not even a No. "*The country, which until then had been quite calm and peaceful*," agent Phillips would recall twenty-five years later, "*in five weeks was in a state of chaos*." The democratically elected president, Jacobo Árbenz, would

[lxviii] These ancient techniques of use and manipulation will continue to be employed in the 21st century. Former CIA employee Edward Snowden revealed in 2013 how, in pursuit of gathering information, agency agents invited a Swiss banker, got him to drink, and then convinced him to drive home. When the police arrested him for drunk driving, the CIA agents offered to solve the problem if he provided some useful information about other people. Apparently, the banker did not agree to work for the CIA, and according to Snowden, "*the agent destroyed another person's life and, when it didn't work, simply abandoned them to their fate*."

resign on June 27 and, after taking refuge for months in the Mexican embassy, would go into exile, where he would die from alcohol abuse in 1971. The plan has been a complete success. Euphoric, the CIA and the U.S. government are confident they can repeat the same formula in other countries, like Cuba, seven years later. Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas would become the de facto dictator, and Guatemala would sink into a series of military regimes supported by successive U.S. governments.

Shortly after the coup (as spy David Phillips would recall), Pepe would be shot in the head in front of his family, and Mario would be riddled with machine gun fire. The new liberator regime would burn the books of the future Nobel Prize winner, Miguel Ángel Asturias. Castillo Armas would be assassinated by his own guard three years later. As if to add a detail, 200,000 Guatemalans, mostly indigenous, would be killed in the decades of terror that the world would not remember with any painful name. It would barely remember. The rest of the population would be terrorized by the state terrorism of dictators like Efraín Ríos Montt, responsible in 1982 for the massacre of thousands of indigenous people and praised by President Ronald Reagan as "*a man of moral integrity who has done much for the social justice of the people of Guatemala*" and by the influential televangelist and friend Pat Robertson as "*an honest man, persecuted by the left*."

Hours after the coup in Guatemala was completed, agent David Atlee Phillips began a file on an unknown Argentine doctor named Ernesto Guevara de la Serna, who had also taken refuge in the Mexican embassy in Guatemala. Phillips led the operation that ended in the ousting of President Árbenz, not only thanks to all the secret information he possessed, but because he knew that ordinary people easily believe the lies he himself invents. But all his knowledge of the facts always ends in an abrupt line he never crosses, not even in his memoirs. It doesn't matter if he personally knew the Director of the Agency, Allen Dulles. The Agency fragments information in such a way that no one has full knowledge of how things work. Or almost no one.

According to the CIA, Guatemala was to be a new Iran. Phillips' boss and friend, Howard Hunt, would sum it up perfectly when he published his memoirs in 2007 under the title *American Spy*: "*Our main weapon didn't fire bullets, but words*."[160]

Once the democratic president was overthrown and replaced by General Castillo Armas, one of the many puppets who are never hard to

find, Edward Bernays, the CIA, and the Eisenhower government continued the effort to clean up the image of the nervous little dictator. Vice President Richard Nixon invited him to Washington to speak on television about the communist government of Árbenz, toppled by "the Guatemalan people" who never accepted the lie and foreign intervention (the backdrop would show a cross as Saint George's lance over the hammer and sickle). The nervous general tells Nixon: "*Tell me what you want me to do, and I'll do it immediately*." In the years and decades to come, the successive dictatorships of Guatemala would not be able to hide the hundreds of thousands massacred as a result of Washington's savior plans. Just one of these, the dictator Efraín Ríos Montt, would order the massacre of 18,000 indigenous people in 1982. Shortly after, during his visit to the tropical hell, President Ronald Reagan would praise the genocidal leader as an example of the fight for freedom in Guatemala and against the Sandinista "regime" of their Nicaraguan neighbors. The most powerful churches in the United States, such as the Club700, would also support their evangelical brother until his death in 2018.

Despite the brutal campaign, the CIA acknowledges that, both in Guatemala and in Latin America, communists are a minor force. The same diagnosis would be made by the Agency and some Latin American armies, such as Argentina's, before embarking on the adventure of saving their countries with more coups d'état. The same researcher from the CIA's history department, Professor Nicholas Cullather, would conclude decades later that the United Fruit Company routinely reported profits and values far below the real figures to evade taxes, but Edward Bernays convinced the U.S. Congress and public opinion otherwise: "*it wasn't about bananas, it was about communism*." From the start, the idea was very convincing. "*Wherever you see the United Fruit Company being talked about or criticized, you should replace the company's name with that of the country, the United States*." Some reports describe Jacobo Árbenz as a conservative politician. The U.S. military in Guatemala also sees no "communist danger," but, as in the invasion of Mexico 110 years earlier, they proceed against their own opinions in the name of efficiency, duty, and honor. Until decades later, when some begin to feel a pang of conscience and start speaking their minds.

At this time, Edward Bernays is the advisor to the company in question (the United Fruit Company), the most important propagandist of the century and the inventor of modern Public Relations. He personally

selects the journalists he considers the least informed from *Times*, *Newsweek*, *The New York Times*, and *Chicago Tribune* and sends them to Guatemala, all expenses paid by the United Fruit Company, to "*report on communist activities*" in Central America. During the trip to Guatemala, amidst cigars and plenty of whiskey, the organizers make sure to solidify the dogma among the journalists: they were all covering the events of a country that had been taken over by a Marxist dictatorship. The Russians prefer vodka. Once inoculated, upon arriving in the actual country, the reporters' vision aligns with the dogma, not reality, and quickly translates into headlines in the U.S. press and the Public Opinion of the Free Country.

The only journalist who dares to mention the reasonable agrarian reform of President Jacobo Árbenz and the population's discontent with the American transnational is Sydney Gruson of the *New York Times*. Shortly after, the business director of the *New York Times* will receive a visit from his friend, CIA Director Allen Dulles, and Sydney Gruson will be removed from covering Central America.

Without ever setting foot in Guatemala, Bernays knows what it's all about. That's his job: not only to know what others ignore but to make them believe what his clients want them to believe. Bernays is an old mercenary, and he's so good that his annual salary (one hundred thousand dollars, not counting extras) is higher than that of any U.S. president. Nephew of Sigmund Freud, his interest is not so much the study of the human mind but the money derived from its manipulation. In 1924, he had convinced President Calvin Coolidge to cook pancakes for his supporters during his re-election campaign, a populist tradition that would survive as a dogma into the 21st century. In 1927, with his "Torches of Freedom" campaign, he had managed to get women to start smoking to increase the profits of Lucky Strike cigarettes. Even unsuspecting feminists fell into his trap. The great Bernays is also responsible for Americans eating eggs with bacon for breakfast, which he achieved to boost sales of bacon for his client, the Beech-Nut Packing Company of New York. He is also one of the masterminds behind the sale of wars and coups d'état, like this one in Guatemala. Not only had Adolf Hitler read with admiration the book *The Passing of the Great Race* (*The Defeat of the Superior Race*) by the American Madison Grant, to whom he wrote thanking him for providing his political bible, but also his future Minister of Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, kept Edward Bernays' books in an accessible place in his library

(yes, Goebbels also had Jewish friends). In the 1940s, Bernays had been hired by the United Fruit Company, known for its tentacles as The Octopus, a transnational corporation that had ruled over the Caribbean and Central America since the 19th century with budgets larger than any of the banana republics in which it operated freely.

Now, the strategy is clear: it is necessary to shake the specter of communism once again. There is no shortage of means, and none are dismissed. It is very easy to be a genius when money is abundant. The powerful CIA agent Howard Hunt Jr. visits the Catholic bishops of the United States and convinces them of the Guatemalan danger, prompting the bishops to swiftly condemn the communism of President Árbenz. On April 9, 1954, a pastoral letter reaches Archbishop Mariano Rossell y Arellano, and later, more elaborate ones, the bishops of Guatemala, warning of the dangerous forces "*enemies of God and the Homeland*." Rossell y Arellano will be decisive in the destruction of democracy and the rule of law in his country and will leave his position as archbishop, as often happens, when he dies in 1964. Shortly before the coup d'état, on April 4, 1954, he will order the carving of a wooden Jesus, later reproduced in bronze, which will be baptized as the *Christ of Esquipulas*. Thus, Jesus, who in life detested weapons as much as he preferred the poor and marginalized, will be used as "Commander in Chief" of the fascist forces of the National Liberation Movement against the Árbenz government and in favor of the American empire, without considering that Jesus was executed by the empire of his time as a mere criminal, alongside two others, and for political, not religious, reasons. The archbishop's statement reads: "*we raise our voices to alert Catholics that the worst atheist doctrine of all time (anti-Christian communism) continues its brazen advance in our country, disguising itself as a social reform movement for the most needy classes… Every Catholic must fight against communism by their very condition as Catholics… They are people without a nation, scum of the earth, who have repaid Guatemala's generous hospitality by preaching class hatred with the aim of plundering and completely destroying our country."* The *talking points* work perfectly in Spanish. Catholic fanaticism closely resembles its old enemy, Protestant fanaticism.

Without the slightest proof, the radios and major newspapers began to publish Washington's narrative: "*We are convinced of the ties between Guatemala and Moscow*." More than enough. After all, a country with an ultra-secret agency like the CIA always knows more than the rest of the mortals and reserves the right to provide evidence "*for security reasons*."

At the OAS, Guatemala's representative, Guillermo Toriello Garrido, protested against the organization's resolution on the right of other nations to intervene if communist influence is confirmed. The resolution was presented at the behest of CIA Director Allen Dulles, who, at the same Caracas meeting, praised the Venezuelan dictatorship of Marcos Pérez Jiménez as *exemplary*. Amid the international noise, Toriello could see clearly what millions cannot and will not: "*it is very painful that any nationalist or independent movement must be labeled as such* [as communist], *as well as any anti-imperialist or anti-monopoly action… And the most critical thing of all is that those who label democracy in such a way do so in order to destroy that very democracy*."

Mexico, Argentina, and Uruguay were the only countries that supported Toriello's arguments, criticized all forms of interventionism, and opposed the "Caracas Declaration." But they abstained from voting. Guatemala is left alone. Resolution 93, pushed by Washington, is forceful and proposes to "*adopt the necessary measures to protect the political independence* [of the American countries] *against the intervention of international communism, which acts in the interests of foreign despotism, and reiterates the faith of the people of America in the effective exercise of representative democracy*." The political literature of power, known as Realism or Realpolitik, is endowed with infinite freedom of patriotic imagination.

Meanwhile, in Opa-Locka, Florida, the fictional campaign of Radio Liberación continues to prepare public opinion for the final stage, while pretending to be a rebel radio station operating from the Guatemalan jungle. As a complement, and as would become a long-standing tradition on the continent, the CIA and the USIA, through the power of dollars, plant at least 200 articles in various Latin American newspapers denouncing the communist threat in Guatemala. Planting opinion pieces in major Latin American media was not the only recurring practice of the CIA. Another custom included the introduction of weapons into friendly or enemy groups to be discovered by the unsuspecting local press. Although U.S. officials considered Árbenz's policies to be "democratic and conservative," Guatemala did not even secure World Bank loans to carry out its agrarian reform. Some Guatemalan landowners were furious and sought the aid of another Washington-backed dictator, Nicaragua's Anastasio Somoza, who, during his visit to President Truman at the White House in April of the previous year, had informed him in his good

English: "*just send me the weapons, and I'll clean up Guatemala for you in one fell swoop*."

Since Árbenz's victory in the 1950 elections, Washington has refrained from selling arms to the new government. A terrible sacrifice but for a good cause. In 1953, it had blocked the purchase of defensive materials from Canada and Germany, but now it was delivering the best weapons to the Guatemalan exiles in Honduras and Nicaragua. On February 9, in collaboration with the FBI, the CIA carried out its Operation Washtub, planting Soviet weapons on the coast of Nicaragua to be discovered by fishermen, allowing Somoza's dictatorship to accuse Guatemala of communist plans in the region.

With no other options, President Árbenz (as Patrice Lumumba would do in Congo seven years later) turned to Czechoslovakia.[lxix] On May 5, 1954, the Scandinavian ship MS Alfhem arrived at Puerto Barrios with a shipment of weapons that would prove obsolete and a new excuse for Washington's intervention. In June, the CIA would bomb the British ship Springfjord in Puerto San José with Napalm, which turned out to be a shipment of cotton and coffee from the American company Grace Line, making it one of the few mistakes for which the CIA would be sued. On May 27, 1954, the friendly dictator Anastasio Somoza informed the press that, in addition to the weapons found, there were photographs of the Soviet submarine that had carried them, destined for Guatemala.

In 1987, Major John R. Stockwell, a CIA officer involved in the operation, would admit that "*the slaughter of 85,000 Guatemalans by U.S.-backed governments has not made new friends for this country, I can assure you… In the end, the UFCo went bankrupt, and its president committed suicide*." Another CIA agent, an active participant in the operation in Guatemala, Navy Colonel Philip Clay Roettinger, was tasked with training soldiers in Honduras and bringing General Castillo Armas, "*that nervous little man*," to the presidency. In 1986, Roettinger would admit that "*no one in the government thought Guatemala could be any threat to the United States… the only threat the Guatemalan government posed was to the interests of the United Fruit Company; that was the only reason*." Years after the coup, Roettinger would leave everything behind and move to Guanajuato,

[lxix] Not unlike the story of Nelson Mandela, who in 1962 was imprisoned with the assistance of the CIA (a fact acknowledged in 2016 by U.S. vice consul and CIA officer Donald Rickard) and then kept on Washington and London's terrorist lists until 2006, by which time he had become an international symbol against racism.

Mexico. According to CIA archives in a "*Declassified Copy*" in 2011 of an article from March 16, 1986, Colonel Roettinger would write that Árbenz was more capitalist than socialist, a president who aimed to transform dependent capitalism into a "*modern capitalist state*," that is, too independent. In "For a CIA Man, It's 1954 Again," Roettinger would lament, "*our success led to 31 years of military dictatorship and 100,000 people killed, in addition to destroying the necessary economic and social reforms in that country… now President Ronald Reagan tells us the same thing the CIA director at the time, Allen Dulles, told us in Florida, that our fight is against communism...*"

Things didn't turn out very well for the new dictator, General Castillo Armas, either. Before being assassinated in 1957, the mustachioed general, styled like Hitler, would be honored by Columbia University with an honorary doctorate for his "*fight for democracy*" (a reason why Rómulo Gallego would return his degree conferred by the same institution). Castillo Armas will visit Washington and participate in a television program with Vice President Richard Nixon. Against the backdrop of a hammer and sickle pierced by the relentless spear of the cross, Nixon will say: "*Guatemala's was a rebellion of the people against a communist regime… in other words, the regime of Jacobo Árbenz was not a government of Guatemala but one controlled by foreign forces*." The general and supreme dictator of Guatemala, Castillo Armas, responded to everything with "*yes, yes*." He didn't understand English or anything else. He only knows that his repressive force comes from members of the regime of Jorge Ubico (an unabashed Nazi in a country of Indigenous people), that his regime has banned the Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky for being subversive, and that a few years ago someone told him that, perhaps, the United States could help him become president after losing the election to the damned Jacobo Árbenz.

On December 29, 1996, the UN will sponsor a Peace Agreement in Guatemala. By then, two percent of the population will own half of the arable land in Guatemala. 200,000 people will have been killed under successive military dictatorships, 93 percent of them executed or massacred by the Soldiers of the Fatherland. In 1999, President Bill Clinton will visit the country and acknowledge his country's responsibility for the destruction of democracy in 1954 and the subsequent support for genocidal military regimes. "*U.S. support for the Guatemalan army and the intelligence involved in the violence in Guatemala was a mistake that must never be repeated*," he says. The same tears will fall in 2010 when Secretary of State

Hillary Clinton acknowledges the atrocity committed by Washington in conducting syphilis and gonorrhea experiments on the poor of Guatemala in the 1940s. As always, everything, when it no longer matters to anyone or has any consequences for the victims. Nor for power.

On June 27, 1954, President Jacobo Árbenz was forced to resign from his position and had to go into exile, putting an end to a rare decade with a country free from military dictatorships in the region. His sin was trying to fulfill his electoral promises to nationalize a small portion of his country's land to return it to the peasants who were not fortunate enough to work for starvation wages for the American multinational UFCo. Hurt by the complicit passivity of the national army, the deposed president said: "*Perhaps the greatest mistake I made was the total trust I had in the Guatemalan Army and the fact that I transmitted this trust to the people and the popular organizations. But I never imagined that, in the face of foreign aggression, where the freedom of our homeland, its honor, and its independence were at stake, the Army could betray us*."

On September 9, after 73 days of refuge in the Mexican embassy, Árbenz is allowed to leave the country. At La Aurora Airport, the informed press follows the man who until recently was the most popular president in the country. At eleven at night and for forty minutes, in front of the cameras, in front of his wife and children, immigration authorities force him to undress to verify that he is carrying neither jewels nor any foreign ideology. The people, represented by a dozen distinguished ladies and gentlemen of good standing, shout at him, "*Traitor! Get out, communist!*" One of the few communists in the country, by chance, is traveling that same night. According to former CIA agent Philip Agee, Carlos Manuel Pellecer (alias *Linlick*) is a CIA infiltrator in the Guatemalan Communist Party and in the communist and popular movements of Mexico City.

Neither the United States nor Latin America's press uses the word "invasion." Words matter more than bombs. The coup is a copy of the manual recently written by the CIA to overthrow the secular and democratically elected government of Mohammed Mossadegh in Iran, a year earlier and for the same reasons. Convinced by the British oil company BP, the CIA had injected a million dollars into Mossadegh's opponents and hundreds of thousands of dollars into the clergy of the time and the local press to convince the people of the danger posed by the elected president. Mossadegh was another independentist president and supporter of the nationalization of national resources like oil, which for half a century

had left the country with a miserable 16 percent. While hundreds of thousands of dollars flowed to the "protesters" in the streets of Tehran, the *New York Times*, *Newsweek* and other influential media outlets repeated the stories about "the dictator Mossadegh" and his "regime." The CIA's playbook would be repeated in Congo when the amateur journalist, elected president, and national hero Patrice Lumumba failed to secure Washington's support to maintain the recently achieved independence. The only reasons for the refusal would be economic: Wall Street businessmen were aligned with the Belgian colonizers. The CIA, along with the Belgian government and companies, would support his overthrow and subsequent assassination a few years later, in 1961. The brutal friendly dictator, Mobutu Sese Seko, Lumumba's killer (and, as often happens, a former officer of the rebel leader), would erect a monument to his own victim, to the delight of the people, and rule Congo for decades, to the satisfaction of civilization and the development of the superior race.

In his penultimate radio address, Árbenz declared: "*Our only crime has been to give ourselves our own laws; our crime has been to apply them to the United Fruit… It is not true that communists are taking power in our government… We have not imposed any regime of terror; on the contrary, the Guatemalan friends of Mr. John Foster Dulles are the ones who wish to impose terror among Guatemalans by attacking children and women from pirate planes*."

The Guatemalan army, still subordinate to the constitution, achieved a small victory by shooting down one of those U.S. pirate planes. A significant portion of the population was not swayed by Radio Liberation and the hundreds of thousands of leaflets dropped from the air against Árbenz. The CIA detected some popular resistance. To prevent the collapse of a masterful operation, President Eisenhower sent more planes to intensify the harassment. More money flowed into the coffers of Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza to facilitate planes that were not American. CIA pilot Jerry DeLarm, alias Rosebinda, bombed military bases and the Guatemalan public radio with grenades and Coca-Cola bottles filled with fuel, while loudspeakers installed in the U.S. embassy pretended a war that never happened.

On June 27, 1954, Árbenz read his final message on public radio: "*We all know how they have bombed and machine-gunned cities, slaughtered women, children, the elderly… In the name of what do they commit these atrocities? What is their flag? We all know it… I bid you farewell, my friends, with bitter pain, but holding firm to my convictions. Protect what has cost so much.*

Ten years of struggle, tears, sacrifices, and democratic achievements… I have not been cornered by the enemy's arguments, but by the material means they possess for the destruction of Guatemala."

These farewell words of Árbenz would be repeated almost twenty years later when, in Chile in 1973, Salvador Allende had to do the same. Similarly, the declarations of innocence by Secretary John Foster Dulles in 1954 and Henry Kissinger in 1973 would be repeated as if written on tracing paper, as further proof of the systematic paranoia of those who need to control the world.

Once the coup was completed, the same John Foster Dulles, the religious fanatic guided only by the moral rectitude of the Scriptures, after organizing the plot based on repeated lies, announced on a radio broadcast: "*The government of Guatemala and its communist agents around the world have insisted on obscuring the truth—the truth of communist imperialism—by denouncing that the interest of the United States was to protect the economic interests of American companies… Led by Colonel Castillo Armas, the Guatemalan people have decided to overthrow the communist government. It has been an internal matter of the Guatemalans*."[161]

Lumumba. Demonize and let others remove him

AT THE INDEPENDENCE CEREMONY OF CONGO, on June 30, 1960, there were two speakers: King Baudouin of Belgium and the revolutionary Patrice Lumumba. The king and the owners of Congo's mines knew it was a formality, as in any business, where one must give up a part to gain the rest. In this case, the part given up had to be symbolic, and the rest was what truly mattered: power over a dirty colony, inhabited by an inferior race, and its economic benefits. It had worked in Latin America and should work even more easily in Africa: in exchange for formal independence, the old Western powers could continue exploiting their colonies without being accused of imperialism, crushing all claims to true independence through legal, illegal, ideological, and cultural corruption.

In his speech, the king reminded the Congolese that his family had undertaken in Africa "*the mission to civilize*" their new country. Not by chance, the ceremony took place at the Palais de la Nation in the capital,

Léopoldville, named in honor of King Leopold II, under whose reign more than ten million Congolese were killed. The Congo was not a country, not even a colony; it was a family business that transferred immense wealth to Belgium and, in return, civilization for the savage slaves.

As he listened, Lumumba must have remembered the millions of Congolese killed and the millions of young people enslaved and tortured with the systematic amputation of their hands as punishment for their parents' low production. A long history that repeated itself across Africa at the hands of other European empires as civilized as the Belgian one. A business that enriched Europe for centuries and that the English poet Rudyard Kipling called "*The White Man's Burden*."

When the king finished his enlightening speech, Patrice Lumumba had to wait for the applause of a diverse and equitable audience to die down, composed of half whites and half blacks, to deliver his speech. But Lumumba, looking at his audience through glasses similar to Malcolm X's, decided to respond to his predecessor's speech. In his improvisation, he recalled "*the humiliating history*" of his people, written with "*tears, fire, and blood*" and called for building a true independence for the Congo.

The words of the new black Prime Minister did not please the king, the European companies, or Wall Street. They tried to buy him with luxuries and money, a tactic that never failed. But this time it failed. On the contrary, with a tongue hard to restrain, during his brief stay in the government house, he not only mentioned the corruption that would keep his people subjugated in the new neocolonial era but also reminded them that Washington maintained privileges in the uranium mines, from which the material for the atomic bombs that devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki fifteen years earlier had come.

The CIA director, the powerful Presbyterian Allen Dulles, had a plan that had worked in Iran and Guatemala a few years earlier: (1) demonize the dangerous leader through the hijacking of the media and (2) eliminate him, making it look like an accident or the work of others.

One of the connections to launch this plan was the U.S. ambassador to Belgium, the banker and philanthropist William Burden, for whom Lumumba was "*a dirty monkey*." Just as with the coup that removed President Árbenz in Guatemala six years earlier, Burden and the Americans involved in the smear campaign against Lumumba had investments in Congolese companies. Allen Dulles was not only a shareholder in the UFCo., which destroyed democracy in Guatemala and plunged it into 40

years of genocide, but also in the American Metal Company, which exploited several mines in the Congo, and whose CEO was another philanthropic friend, Harold K. Hochschild. In fact, Hochschild was one of the founders of the Africa-America Institute in New York to educate and promote "*the future leaders of Africa*", as is still repeated today in various tertiary education institutions in the United States. The Africa-America Institute (though most of its members were unaware) also received funding from the CIA.[162] The Agency had done the same with other educational centers in Latin America.[lxx] To mention just one case.

No religious and civilized soul wanted the nationalist leader who had dared to use the slogan "*The Congo for the Congolese*." Well, "America for Americans" is fine, because here we don't want inferior races or poor invaders. When the inferior races raise the same flag, not out of xenophobia but to fight for their independence, it is proof of their evil. On November 27, 1959, before Lumumba was elected Prime Minister, Burden wrote to the CIA director, Allen Dulles, to stop the independence demonstrations in the Congo that could spread to other countries, with the "*use of new weapons, such as the gases that have been developed…*"

Just as Fidel Castro had done a year earlier, and with the same purpose, in July 1960 Lumumba traveled to Washington to ensure that his independence plans would not face a lethal enemy. But by September, his authority was already being ignored by the head of the armed forces and Washington's favorite, Mobutu Sese Seko. Lumumba's appointment of Mobutu as commander-in-chief of the army is part of a long tradition of military betrayals of revolutionary leaders across multiple continents.[lxxi]

[lxx] In *La frontera salvaje* (2021), we addressed the case of the Institute of Political Education in Costa Rica, whose purpose was "*to create conservative leaders or promoters of an obedient left that would replace other dissenting options. The course 'Training of Political Leaders, Responsible for the Defense of Democracy in America,' for example, was led by two prominent figures assisted by the CIA: the Dominican Juan Bosch Gaviño and former Costa Rican president José Figueres Ferrer. The institute was funded by the CIA through institutions like the Kaplan Foundation and overseen by CIA agent, the Romanian Sacha Volman. Despite the efforts, U.S. observers couldn't understand why their students refused to condemn Fidel Castro and, on the contrary, did not forget U.S. interventions in the region*" (p. 365).

[lxxi] The case of General Mobutu, promoted by Patrice Lumumba in Congo, is just one of a long list of similar betrayals. In Spain, Francisco Franco was appointed by the Second Republic. In Mexico, General Porfirio Díaz was pardoned by Lerdo de Tejada for his attempted coup against Benito Juárez; Tejada was later exiled by Díaz. In Bolivia, General René Barrientos was promoted by Víctor Paz Estenssoro, who was then overthrown by Barrientos. In Chile, General Augusto Pinochet was promoted by Salvador Allende; in Panama, General

The U.S. Senate report of November 20, 1975, revealed that the CIA had already ordered Lumumba's poisoning in 1960. Since CIA doctors had observed in his photos that he had particularly white teeth, they assumed Lumumba must brush his teeth regularly, so they recommended poisoning the toothpaste he used.

According to government transcripts, in August, Allen Dulles sent a cable to the CIA office in Leopoldville stating that "*the primary and urgent [goal is] the removal of Lumumba*."[163] In August, President Eisenhower (accused in his own country of being a tool of communism) had authorized the CIA to eliminate Lumumba, though history shows that such authorizations were largely symbolic. On September 19, according to documents declassified much later, the president confessed that, even though the Soviets did not have the power to disrupt politics in the Congo, he still wanted Lumumba to be "*thrown into a river full of crocodiles*."[164]

With nothing left to lose, Lumumba decided to seek help from the Soviet Union, which sent some weapons that were not enough to prevent the destruction of the Congo's independence revolution but, on the contrary, added fuel to the fire of Western propaganda. By then, although Lumumba's ties to Moscow were less significant than those of any Western power, and even though Lumumba himself had insisted that "*the Congo will not be a satellite of either Moscow or Washington*" (or perhaps because of it), he was already known as "the Devil."

Shortly after, Belgian and American agents made contact with General Mobutu. At the same time, the CIA recruited European mercenaries to infiltrate the UN guard protecting Lumumba's residence and secured execution squads to eliminate the revolutionary leader. The mercenaries were registered under the codes QJ-WIN and WI-ROUGE. As a backup plan, the poisoned toothpaste was sent, another masterpiece by Sidney Gottlieb, the mastermind behind the infamous MKUltra mind control and drug project.

Finally, the CIA, one of the most effective literary agencies of the century, managed to have Lumumba escape from his house arrest, protected by UN forces, so that he would fall into Mobutu's territory. Lumumba's plan was to reach Stanleyville, an area still under the control of

---

Manuel Noriega was promoted by Omar Torrijos. In Argentina, General Rafael Videla was promoted by Isabel Perón. In Uruguay, General Manini Ríos was promoted by Tabaré Vázquez. In Bolivia, once again, General Williams Kaliman Romero was promoted by President Evo Morales, who was later forced to leave office by Romero, among others.

the independence guerrillas. When he managed to cross the Sankuru River, where a group of followers awaited him, he heard the cry of his five-year-old daughter, who, along with his wife, had been kidnapped despite UN protection. Although his followers begged him not to return, Lumumba crossed the river again. On the other side, for a moment, he managed to convince Mobutu's soldiers to join the right side of history. After a few minutes of silence, during which the history of the Congo and Africa seemed to depend on a coin tossed in the air that never seemed to land, the soldiers were threatened by Captain Pongo with serious consequences for insubordination. As often happens, history was decided by crumbs. The soldiers began to beat Lumumba and his daughter. Transported to the capital, Léopoldville, Lumumba was tortured again, this time in front of television cameras, and then confined to a maximum-security prison.

In December, after a visit to the Congo, Senator and presidential candidate John F. Kennedy promised to change U.S. foreign policy and free Lumumba. Not coincidentally, shortly after, New York Times reporter *Paul Hoffman* arrived in the Congo. As David Talbot describes in his book *The Devil's Chessboard*, Hoffman was an Austrian former Nazi collaborator in Europe, placed as a journalist for the *Times* in Rome by the Angleton family. Hoffman had a clear bias against Lumumba. Talbot notes that almost all New York Times reports insisted on labeling Lumumba as "*inexperienced and irresponsible*" when not calling him a "*dictator*. Hoffman's reports only radicalized the strategy of discrediting and demonizing the independence leader as a dreamer, an "*Alice in Wonderland*", despite which, even from prison, according to the star reporter, Lumumba continued plotting the assassination of whites and facilitating the entry of Soviet weapons into the country.

To avoid any miscalculation, Lumumba was transferred to Katanga, the richest province in copper and minerals, controlled by secessionists and his fiercest opponents. According to the CIA itself, this transfer meant a death sentence for Lumumba. On January 17, 1961, in Jadotville, the rebel was executed by a squad and then cut into pieces, exactly as would happen seven years later to another revolutionary, Ernesto Che Guevara, also executed by another CIA-collaborating army in Bolivia.

The tragic and humiliating fate of Lumumba would be repeated fifty years later by a leader who, like many others from the Arab, African, and Latin American world, had understood the dangers of an open democracy: Muammar Gaddafi. At the beginning of the new century, the

Libyan leader had proposed relaunching a Pan-African League, for which he was overthrown by the civilized and democratic Western powers and brutally murdered on camera, also by "opposition forces." Nothing new. The same year as Lumumba's assassination, the CIA would participate in a coup attempt against the French president himself, Charles de Gaulle, preceded by a propaganda campaign in the media, to prevent the imminent independence of Algeria. Dulles believed that an independent Algeria would be an open door for the Soviets in Africa. Not coincidentally, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, currently published by the CIA on its official website, Algeria was "*the leading producer of natural gas in Africa, the second-largest supplier of natural gas to Europe outside the region, and one of the top three oil producers in Africa*."[165]

After the assassination of Lumumba and the establishment of Mobutu's brutal and corrupt dictatorship, some CIA agents, like Laurence R. Devlin, enriched themselves in the Congo's diamond industry, while continuing to work for the Agency, as reported by the Church Committee of the U.S. Senate in 1975.

Dulles' plan proved successful once again. Why not repeat it in Cuba? However, a year later, the same formula of (1) disinformation and media harassment, followed by (2) an attack or invasion "by other enemies," failed. It failed for the reason given by one of the organizers, CIA agent David Atlee Phillips: "*Castro and Che Guevara learned from history; we did not*."[166] Allen Dulles himself, after the job was done in the Congo, admitted: "*I think we exaggerated a bit about the importance of the Soviet Union's role in the Congo*." Agent Larry Devlin added: "*today I believe Lumumba posed no threat to U.S. security*."[167]

In 2002, the Belgian government apologized for this history. Only an apology. It is not known if it was accepted. In 2020, King Philippe of Belgium also wept. In a letter to the president of the Congo, he stated that "*our history consists of shared achievements, but also painful episodes. During the Congo Free State, violent and cruel acts were committed that continue to weigh on our collective memory. During the subsequent colonial period, suffering was caused and humiliations were inflicted. I would like to express my deepest regret for those wounds of the past*."[168]

In 2021, Belgium announced that, to repair the pain caused by centuries of colonial exploitation, in 2024 they would change the name of a street called Leopold II in the city of Ghent to Patrice Lumumba, compensating its residents financially for the inconvenience.[169]

As for tangible reparations to the Congolese, nothing. Or almost nothing. In June 2022, Belgian authorities returned one of Lumumba's teeth to his daughter and to the Congo.

Cuba and the media war with different resources

AFTER THE TRIUMPH OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTION on the first day of 1959, the dispute over the ideology of the new regime began. Two things were clear: (1) the revolutionaries had overthrown a bloody regime, supported by Washington, the Italian-American mafia, and major U.S. businesses; (2) naturally, in a continent plagued by dictatorships and other right-wing regimes since the 19th century, the revolutionaries were leftist; and (3) it was unclear whether they would be obedient leftists, like the Bolivian Revolution of 1952, easy to hijack and inoculate, or independentists.

The third point was the problem. It always has been, for centuries. Even moderate capitalists, independentists, and somewhat obedient figures like Nicaraguan José Santos Zelaya in the early 20th century were removed from the presidency despite their relative successes with their countries' economies and social improvements. In the context of the Cold War, all that old history was reduced to the simplification: "Is he capitalist or communist?" From then on, any leader or individual who did not align as an obedient capitalist was, necessarily, a communist.

So, when on April 7, 1959, Fidel Castro visited the United States for the first time after his revolutionary triumph, the million-dollar question was no different. After interviewing him at the hotel where he was staying, CIA agent Gerry Droller (then known as Frank Bender) concluded: "*Castro is not only not a communist but is a convinced anti-communist*."[170] Nevertheless, the CIA's plans to assassinate Castro, the first of hundreds of failed attempts, had begun the same day Castro and Che entered Havana without Batista. Kill him just in case.

From then on, the sabotage also began. Just a few months after Droller reported that the suspect was not a communist, in February 1960, pilots hired by the CIA bombed sugar mills in Cuba. In March, a French ship with Belgian weaponry exploded in the port of Havana, killing dozens of people. A second explosion killed even more, especially those who

rushed to the rescue, a tactic well-known in the manuals of organized crime by secret agencies. There were no songs or stamps for the new Maine, as in 1898, but Fidel Castro closed his funeral speech for the victims with the phrase "*Patria o muerte. Venceremos*" ("Homeland or death. We shall overcome"), which became one of the most significant slogans of the small island's resistance against the greatest superpower of the time, located less than a hundred miles away. Other Cuban mercenaries, like Antonio Veciana, were already organizing attacks with logistical and financial support from the CIA, as detailed by Veciana himself in his 2017 memoirs *Trained to Kill* (*Entrenado para matar*).

Despite everything, Fidel Castro was interested in maintaining the U.S. market, albeit under new terms that included economic independence and non-interference in national affairs. Among other policies, he implemented the nationalization of some sugar mills and Channel 6 of television, something that in any country, including the United States, is a legal resource, but in many others had cost the process of economic reforms, as was the then-recent case of Guatemala in 1954.

But Fidel Castro was not only interested in maintaining the U.S. market but still believed that a new agreement with the northern giant was possible. So, on September 18, 1960, he landed again at Idlewild Airport (later John F. Kennedy) in New York. The arrival of the delegation was greeted by the American left and met with disdain by the "White Rose," a pro-Batista group that would later operate alongside other illegal groups in Miami as "anti-Castro exiles." The Cuban plane that brought him was forced to return to Cuba, while the delegation was taken to the Shelburne Hotel, located, to this day, on Lexington Avenue and 37th Street. The hotel demanded a deposit of $20,000 ($98,000 in 2022 value). At the same time, the State Department had decreed that the delegation could not leave Manhattan, and no other hotel in the area dared to take them in. Castro quipped that if New York was unable to provide lodging for a diplomatic delegation from another country, then the UN should be moved to another city, like Havana. Clearly, the delegation had been put under pressure, so Fidel Castro decided to seize the opportunity for a propaganda maneuver and moved to a modest hotel north of the wealthy Midtown district, in the heart of Harlem. With the bags packed for *check out*, someone entered the Shelburne lobby and asked to speak with the Cuban leader. When the bearded man appeared, the stranger told him that

Malcolm X had a hotel in Harlem ready for the delegation, the Hotel Theresa.[lxxii]

Not all Cuban emigrants and exiles from Batista's regime received the news with the same enthusiasm. At the end of the 19th century, the racist conservatives of the American South, defeated in the Civil War, had managed, through Jim Crow laws, to segregate Cubans in Florida by their color, preventing the promiscuous custom of sharing stores, clubs, hospitals, and industries. Although at the time both white and black Cubans were offended by the arrangement, now, eighty years later and in the second most populous state of Cubans in the country, the separation of colors and classes was exercised under the ideological excuse of the Cold War. At the entrance of the Hotel Theresa in Harlem, the groups of protesters against the revolution were white, while those who supported it were black or mixed-race. Harlem's newspaper, the *New York Citizen-Call*, noting that the official Cuban delegation was composed of both white and black members, published: "*On Monday night, two thousand black New Yorkers waited in the rain for the Cuban Prime Minister, Fidel Castro, to arrive at the famous and historic Hotel Theresa in Harlem... For the oppressed inhabitants of the Harlem ghetto, Castro is that bearded revolutionary who expelled the corrupt from his nation and dared to tell white America to go to hell*."[171] Later, referring to Castro and Che Guevara, Malcolm X declared to the American press: "*don't tell us who our friends and enemies should be*."[172]

This scandal, which exposed to the world the international harassment by Washington and the brutality of racial segregation in the United States, right in the middle of the Civil Rights struggle in the country and the decolonization of Africa, only further enraged the Eisenhower-Nixon administration. Just hours after their expulsion from the Shelburne Hotel and their hasty entry into the modest hotel in Harlem, the most luxurious hotels in Manhattan offered the Cuban delegation free accommodation. Castro decided to turn the initial humiliation into another moral blow to the arrogance of the giant. He rejected the offers, and the delegation stayed in Harlem.

The FBI took note. It is known that at least one agent managed to enter the Hotel Theresa and spy on a meeting between Castro and Malcolm X. Meanwhile, the CIA, which, lacking territorial jurisdiction,

[lxxii] This hotel had previously hosted Black celebrities who were not accepted in downtown Manhattan, such as Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, and Nat King Cole.

employed the mercenary firm of Bob Maheu (the same one that, in the service of the dictator Rafael Trujillo, had made Professor Galíndez disappear in New York four years earlier) to plan the first of the 638 assassination attempts against Castro.

At the Plaza Hotel, Maheu met with CIA agent Jim O'Connell and John Roselli, one of the leaders of the Italian-American mafia, which owned the cabarets, brothels, and casinos in Cuba, protected by Batista and longed for by generations of nostalgic Cubans in the United States as "The Golden Age" when everyone lived dancing salsa, drinking lots of rum, and making lots of money. These mafias had been displaced by the 1959 Revolution, so the CIA understood that they shared a common goal. To assassinate the bad dictator, who had been in power for only a few months, Roselli put Maheu in touch with other mobsters from Tampa, Florida. Two of them were Sam Giancana and Santo Trafficante Jr. Roselli, both donors to Kennedy's presidential campaign and later (likely) collaborators in the conspiracy for his assassination, although this information has not been declassified by Washington, for some very good reason, even though all those involved are now dead (a condition required to not declassify secret documents). Giancana was assassinated in Chicago in 1975, just before he was to testify before the U.S. Senate's Church Committee, which was investigating the CIA's systematic assassination plans . CIA Director William Colby assured: "*we had nothing to do with that*."[173]

Maheu and the CIA knew that the assassination of a foreign leader on American soil would only worsen Washington's reputation, so they decided to take the big moment to Havana. Upon his return, Castro gave a predictable speech from the balcony of the Government House, which was interrupted by a bomb. A few minutes later, a second one exploded, and a few hours later, a third. That was the first of 638 failed attempts to assassinate the only dictator that Washington, the CIA, the major media, and, consequently, the American people, could see in the Caribbean, in Latin America, and the rest of the world. Immediately followed were poisoning attempts carried out by several Cuban mercenaries, such as Juan Orta and other infiltrators, for hefty sums in dollars, but none achieved their goal. Nor did the plans involving gases during interviews or weapons hidden in press microphones work, like the one organized from Bolivia with the support of Cuban Antonio Veciana when Castro visited Chile in 1971.

In his speech at the UN in September 1960, Castro responded to the accusations from the mainstream press that the Cubans had chosen a

brothel to stay in: "*For some gentlemen, a humble hotel in the Harlem neighborhood, of the Black people of the United States, must be a brothel*."[174] Years later, Malcolm X recalled this struggle over semantics, stating with his usual provocative style: "*the only white man I've ever liked was Fidel Castro*."

The CIA failed to assassinate Fidel Castro, but the FBI succeeded in getting Malcolm X killed in 1965, as always, as if it were the work of others, of "*lone wolves*."[lxxiii] Two years later, in 1967, they had more luck with their plan to assassinate Che Guevara in Bolivia.

Washington's first major grievance with the Cuban Revolution was its demonstrations of independence, when the revolutionaries decided to exercise it using the same capitalist rules of compensated expropriation with an annual interest payment of 4.5 percent.[175] The second offense, now largely forgotten, was to undermine the moral and political authority of white Americans over Black people in their own territory, at a historical moment when that was the primary concern of a significant portion of the white population, a politically powerful sector accustomed to the moral, cultural, and economic parameters of racist and segregationist groups like the KKK and the now-disguised Nazism. The third major offense did not arise in Cuba but in the United States: the identification of any anti-racist group with communism ("*Race Mixing Is Communism*", 1959) and then the push of the Revolution toward the Soviet Union as a direct consequence of the military invasion of the Bay of Pigs in 1961.

Weeks later, on October 12, 1960, the young Senator John F. Kennedy (the same one who in 1958, in Congress, had recommended continuing to fund Latin American armies to maintain Washington's political influence in those countries) set up his little sales booth in front of the humble Hotel Theresa and gave a speech against racial discrimination and the socialist ideas of the Cuban Revolution. Nothing better than hijacking the struggle of the underprivileged and then limiting it to a specific area, the national one, just as firefighters burn a forest boundary to stop a larger fire.

Among other battles that the humble yet proud Cuban Revolution won against the greatest imperial power of the time, just a step away, was the war of ideas. As in the case of the Bay of Pigs, the media war unfolded

[lxxiii] "*Attempts to reopen the case to uncover the possible roles of the FBI, the New York Police Department, and leaders of the Nation of Islam, including Louis Farrakhan, have been unsuccessful*" (New York Times, November 17, 2021).

over decades with a great disparity of resources and dialectical talent, confirming the phrase of the Mexican poet Octavio Paz, in another context, that "*the right has no ideas but interests*." The former, the resources, were always and excessively on the side of Washington and the corporations; the latter, the talent, judging by the results, was on the other side.

The mercenary press

WITH THE OPPOSITION OF THE NAVY, on July 27, 1973, the elected president of Uruguay, Juan María Bordaberry, and another Latin American army decided to save freedom, democracy, the homeland, and honor against foreign influence. To do so, they must suppress individual freedoms, parliament, human rights, and allow Washington's plan to be carried out while blaming someone else (in this case, the Tupamaros) for the necessary dictatorship. Like other cases in Latin America, Bordaberry's electoral campaign had been partly funded by the Brazilian dictatorship, another product of Washington's planned destabilization that ended the progressive government of João Goulart in 1964 and installed another military dictatorship and the creation of death squads.

The CIA agent assigned to Uruguay in 1964, Philip Franklin Agee, is in London writing his memoirs, from where he will be expelled, not for his covert operations but for his revelations. During the previous decade, Agee writes, the major media outlets in Uruguay, as in other Latin American countries, were inoculated. With a budget of one million dollars annually (equivalent to over eight million in 2020) and following the guidelines of *Operation Mockingbird*, "two or three propaganda articles" were planted daily in newspapers like *El País*, *La Mañana*, and *El Día*.[lxxiv] The articles were presented as unsigned editorials, which reinforced the illusion of objective reality, and were predictably cited by other media outlets. In April 1964, Agee recalls, the CIA had planted a half-page article in the Colorado newspaper La Mañana, signed by Hada Rosete, a representative of the Cuban Revolutionary Council, which circulated the idea of the presence of Russian and Cuban weapons in the hemisphere to support

[lxxiv] According to the confession of a secret agent during an academic investigation in the late 1980s, the CIA planted between 70 and 80 stories per day in foreign press. No evidence or reason suggests that this tradition has been abandoned; quite the opposite. According to Chinese agents exiled in Australia, the same practice continues today by Beijing.

subversive groups in Venezuela, Honduras, Peru, Colombia, Argentina, Panama, and Bolivia. This operation was supposedly directed from a great distance by the Soviet and Cuban embassies in Mexico, Buenos Aires, and Montevideo, the only three Soviet embassies on the continent during the 1950s. The article had been written by agents Gerald O'Grady and Brooks Reed. Other articles published in the country's major newspapers had been written in New York by the Cuban Guillermo Martínez Márquez, editor of the Inter-American Press Society.

These are common practices across the continent and beyond. In 1976, the Otis Pike Commission of the House of Representatives and the Church Committee of the U.S. Senate would reproduce one of the CIA reports dated October 1970 on its systematic activity of planting editorials and providing false or convenient information in local media to influence or prepare for an intervention. In its own conclusions, the Church Committee would reveal the "systematic use of the press, radio, film, pamphlets, posters, and direct mail" by the CIA. In the case of the planned coup in Chile, weeks before Salvador Allende's inauguration: "São Paulo, Tegucigalpa, Lima, Montevideo, Bogotá, Mexico City report that material on the Chile issue continues to be reproduced. Even some parts have been reproduced in the New York Times and the Washington Post. Propaganda efforts continue to yield satisfactory results in news coverage according to our guidelines..." The memoirs of CIA agents, such as those of Howard Hunt published in 2007, will acknowledge these practices and add others, questioned by the same Church Committee of the Senate that investigated them thirty years earlier. On December 26, 1977, the New York Times will publish an investigation with other names of media outlets involved in this million-dollar disinformation operation, including Avance, El Mundo, Prensa Libre, Bohemia, El Diario de las Américas, and The Caracas Daily Journal, in addition to multiple radio programs across the region and news agencies like EPS and Agenda Orbe Latino American. Various CIA agents also operate covertly or with permission in news agencies like Reuters, The Associated Press, and United Press International. In some cases, like Combate, even their editors were unaware of the source of funding. Nine years earlier, an unknown Harvard professor named Henry Kissinger, a survivor of Nazi persecution in Germany, had summarized the entire imperialist philosophy with his classic cynicism: "There are two types of realists: those who manipulate facts and those who create them; the West needs men capable of creating their own reality."

Radio stations like La Voz de la Liberación were created from scratch for the coup in Guatemala in 1954, but the most common practice, due to its cost and, above all, its credibility, was the inoculation of established and somewhat prestigious media outlets. Television and some radio stations in Uruguay had also fallen into this network, but newspapers were preferred because they were the ideal space to introduce political ideas and information that would later be repeated by other media. In the tranquil country of the far South, the CIA, which had also worked with officials, police, and politicians, had encountered difficulties in universities and popular organizations. Unlike its previous experience in other countries on the continent, agent Agee had acknowledged, Uruguay was harder to corrupt with money due to its high social and economic development and a strong education system that dated back to the times of José Batlle y Ordóñez at the beginning of the century. For this reason, instead of infiltrating leftist groups and university organizations like the FEUU, they had decided to work more at the secondary education level, hoping that these younger students would one day become university students. They had also invested in promoting alternative "free unions" and media-savvy, ruralist politicians like Benito "Chicotazo" Nardone (who later became president for a year), who also served as channels for the CIA's narrative and policies. During the Cold War, the strategy was to subsidize major Latin American media outlets with secret funds or through advertising payments. In the Internet Age, the strategy would be to position them on the most trafficked digital highways, in the hands of U.S. companies with frequent connections to Washington. As various studies from institutions like the American Institute for Behavioral Research and Technology would demonstrate, by 2015, major companies would have invested $20 billion annually just in manipulating information searches to favor one political option over another.

The plan unfolded as expected. Not only was a dictatorship established for eleven years in one of Latin America's most democratic countries, but, as in any other country south of the Rio Grande, the idea was implanted that militaristic barbarism was not an attack but a defense against foreign interference. For generations to come, a significant portion of the population and politicians would continue to justify the military dictatorship and blame its human rights violations on a guerrilla group called the Tupamaros, which emerged in the 1960s and was disarmed long before the coup. The argument that a country can suppress human rights

to fight those who seek to destroy human rights would remain an almost absolute success of propaganda organized in Washington since the 19th century. The idea that major Latin American media and armies defend honor and foreign interference would also persist.

Functional deniers (many of them educated in these major manipulation outlets) would discredit Agee for deserting the CIA and would fail to mention that his revelations were not denied by other agents and directors of the agency—quite the opposite. Various confessions from agents who remained loyal to their mission until their final days would acknowledge and confirm these practices without a hint of remorse.

The CIA operates in every country from within airlines, mining companies, and cleaning services (in many of which it is a shareholder) to unions and educational centers. But media and entertainment have always been areas of extreme sensitivity and utility. Media are the primary creators of opinion and sensibilities, and, as Edward Bernays recognized long before the CIA was invented, the best way to manage a democracy is to tell people what to think. As Bernays himself practiced countless times when hired by Washington to sell a coup d'état or by a private company to sell bacon, public opinion is a product, something manufactured and sold like any other product. You just have to get others to say and repeat what we want them to say and repeat without ever knowing its true origin. "Especially when people have no idea where a lie really comes from."

For decades and generations to come, the dominant major media outlets and creators of public opinion in almost the entire world will be conservative, right-wing. As part of the same logic, they will be accused of being liberal, left-wing.

In their manuals, the CIA and the National Security Council ("A Plan for National Psychological Warfare" from July 10, 1950) shared a consensus they had stolen from propagandist Edward Bernays: the most effective form of propaganda "is that in which the subject moves in the desired direction for reasons they believe stem from their own freedom."

In Argentina, the disappointment of Peronists with the new right-wing Peronism and subversive activity (born under the dictatorship of Onganía in the 1960s) had reached levels of national tension and served as a new excuse for the repressive forces. A few months before the 1976 elections, with paramilitary violence from the far right acting at will, the military would decide to stage another coup and prevent the victory of the left

wing of Peronism, represented by Héctor Cámpora, and the possibility of regaining power.

In Uruguay, the 1973 coup d'état also did not aim to defeat the Tupamaros, who had already been defeated. The goal was to eliminate the threat of a popular option through the power of the vote. In Chile, the coup d'état was not possible before Allende's victory, but after. This was the difference.

Years later, the elites in political and social power will tirelessly repeat that, had it not been for leftist rebel groups like the Tupamaros, military dictatorships would never have existed. This fabrication will become dogma. Like the traumas of the dictatorships, it will survive for generations to come.

Conspiracy Theories and Critical Thinking

I REMEMBER THAT IN THE 70S, when I was a child in elementary school and later in the 80s in high school, all claims that in Latin America the dictatorships had received support from the United States were labeled as "conspiracy theories." Even the stories I heard on my grandfather's farm in 1979, about what would later in the 90s become known in Argentina as "The Death Flights," were dismissed in the same way.

In 1996, the protagonist and narrator of my first novel *Memoria de un desaparecido*, had written, "*There is no better strategy against a true rumor than to invent a false one that pretends to confirm it*." Almost thirty years later, while sifting through declassified documents in Washington, I came across a similar or, rather, complementary idea. The CIA had already discovered in the 50s that in "psychological warfare," one of the most effective practices for manipulating public opinion consisted of using false sources (like unionist newspapers created by the Agency itself) to disseminate true or verifiable facts with the purpose of creating a nonexistent reality, for example, in favor of some revolt or a summit in support of NATO. Shortly after, in the mid-50s, it began investing in the opposite strategy: using established and recognized media in each country to spread false or partial information.

One of the many operations to shape opinion under the first principle (false media, verifiable but selective content) was called LCCASSOCK. Some of the documents generated were declassified by FOIA in 2007 and are now available even on the CIA's own website (if someone doesn't feel comfortable entering this site, and they have every reason not to, they can use the *Tor* browser, the same one they use to erase the traces of their espionage). In one of these PDFs, dated October 19, 1956, the CIA defines LCCASSOCK as "*a psychological warfare project that until recently prepared, printed, and distributed counterfeit editions of official publications*. "This project "*though it no longer produces its own forgeries, prepares and distributes four main publications… it also produces special editions designed to target specific groups or to take advantage of special events. It has also carried out several administrative harassment operations… The goal is to deliver high-quality propaganda to groups with little access to Western propaganda*." In one case among a hundred others documented (including how to educate a child, how to become an attractive woman, false rumors, or selective comparisons of a capitalist supermarket with an inferior one on the communist side), this operation worked in collaboration with the Falken Group and European Catholic Youth to "*completely write*" various fake magazines that ended up distributing 20,000 copies monthly.[176]

For a public indoctrinated by massive, multimillion-dollar campaigns, designed and operated from the most absolute and effective darkness, everything that came from reliable Western propaganda was true. Everything that questioned the role of Washington's and the CIA's manipulation was "conspiracy theories."

More recently, in 2012, responding to the *Foreign Policy* article "The Land of Too Many Summits"[177] about the accusation that my friend Eduardo Galeano was a master of "conspiracy theories," I published an article with a central argument whose translation into Spanish would be: "*If Eduardo Galeano (a writer, not a powerful CEO nor a commander-in-chief of some army, another drunk president, nor the leader of some obscure sect or lobby) is 'the oldest of Latin American conspiracy theorists,' then who is and was, de facto, the most grizzled of the actual conspirators in Latin America?*"[lxxv]

[lxxv] As is tradition, the article published in 2012 in newspapers and magazines of the time has almost completely disappeared from the internet. Its title in English was "The Hoariest of Latin American Conspiracy Theorists" and can still be read republished in the book *Neomedievalism. Reflections on the Post-Enlightenment Era* (University of Valencia, 2018).

The real inconvenient facts, more often than not, were labeled by military and corporate dictatorships as "conspiracy theories" (in modern Spanish, "*conspiratorias*"). It turned out that the only thing hidden wasn't the theories but the conspiracies themselves. By definition, the official and dominant narratives are what we see of the iceberg; the rest are the facts.

As in many other cases, the CIA invented strategies for manipulating public opinion before their ideological adversaries (a political party, a guerrilla movement, a union, a popular organization) could adopt them, much like a judo fighter uses their opponent's strength to their advantage. This was the case with the cacerolazos, for example, and with the very expression "*conspiracy theory*" in 1967.

In the third decade of the 21st century, this awareness of reality manipulation by the media was adopted by the right—that is, those who have always held power in the major Western powers and their satellites—as a desperate last resort. From the conspiracy of powerful organizations and corporations at the top, there was suddenly a shift to the paradox of manipulation by those at the bottom. History is fond of switching roles to maintain some status quo.

According to New York University professor Mark Crispin Miller, the idea of a conspiracy, whether positive or negative, was a long-accepted concept by Americans since the nation's founding. In fact, "the Declaration of Independence itself constitutes a conspiracy theory from start to finish. Americans never found it strange that elites could be the centers of conspiracy." Conservative author Sharyl Attkisson claimed that everything changed in 1967 when the CIA introduced this expression into the media to counter those who came forward with an unexpected idea.[178] More likely, this reaction against what we might call "the framework of media narrative" had been established much earlier, for example, when in 1933 the most decorated general of his generation and hero of military interventions in the Caribbean and Central America, Smedley Butler, began accusing Wall Street of using the *Marines* as the imperialist muscle for their private businesses.

The confusion suited the CIA perfectly, whose manuals insist on doing everything in a way that can be denied, even when all the evidence

is against it.[lxxvi] As the narrator protagonist of my first novel had said back in 1992, "there is no better strategy against a true rumor than to invent a false one that pretends to confirm it."

The epistemological problem lies in the fact that both conspiracy theorists and proponents of critical thinking share a common element: legitimate doubt about an established truth shaped by the repetitions of social power. But they differ in the process of inquiry and, naturally, in the final results. The former resemble theology and end up in religious sects. The latter, at least in their idealistic foundation, do not arrive at a principle but at a discovery that is independent of their desires.

This "legitimate doubt" has roots in the deep psychology of the masses, exploited by the media and advertising (propaganda) agencies, but it also has a historical root that is easily traceable.

The phrase and label of "conspiracy theory," like many other recent traditions, was designed, organized, and inoculated by the CIA as a way to delegitimize accusations from the press and dissident groups about their real conspiracies. Just as believers in the Seven-Day Creation Theory insist that the Theory of Evolution is just a theory and should not be taught in public schools because only "facts" should be taught there, so too did the inventors of the "conspiracy theory" concept link political facts to a "theory" that, as if that weren't enough, carried all the negativity of the very foundation of the CIA: "conspiracy."

The journalist and figure of the American right, Sharyl Attkisson, in her book *The Smear* summarizes the CIA's strategy that we all know from our studies of their conspiracies, coups, and assassinations of leaders in Latin America and that, in various forms, appear in their manuals, documents, cables, and even historical investigations:

1. Never acknowledge or admit anything
2. Deny everything
3. Demand proof
4. Accuse your accusers
5. Discredit them

[lxxvi] When on June 6, 2014, at 10:49 a.m., the CIA launched its Twitter account, its first post was: "*We can neither confirm nor deny that this is our first tweet*." For CNN and other media outlets, this was a display of humor by the Agency. For others, the others and us, it was not.

According to Mark Crispin Miller, a professor at New York University and media specialist, "*labeling something as a 'conspiracy theory' is, by far, a much more effective method of taming the press than the more direct censorship methods used in other countries… It's a subtle form of intimidation and a very effective way of keeping people aligned and under control. Once journalists internalize the idea that there's something ridiculous, something unbelievable about someone who suspects a conspiracy theory might be true, they become useless guardians of our freedom*."[179]

The origins of political propaganda must be sought in the origins of history and, very likely, in prehistory itself. Oral myths not only sought to explain the world and life beyond, not only were they a response to existential anguish, but they also served to establish a certain social order, to justify a dominant totem, an elite, matriarchal power, and more commonly, patriarchal power. Even today in Africa, many rituals representing foreign spirits serve the purpose of instilling fear in women against overly exogamous temptations. Just as in its origins art was connected to magical rituals (good luck in hunting) and religious ones (favors from the gods), political propaganda can also be found in ancient Egypt and in the Bible itself, which unified and justified the nationalist conquests of the Hebrew people in the name of a nationalist god who, over the centuries, would become internationalized with Christianity.

Apart from God, during the Modern Age, science became one of the main totems of propaganda. In the 19th century, for example, the slave system in the United States expanded westward first and then to the rest of the world, adapting its discourse until it amalgamated the Christian theory of Creation with the cursed theory of Evolution: God wants Blacks, Native Americans, and the poor to be obedient; the expansion of slavery was the best way to expand freedom, order, progress, and civilization; the white race (also called Caucasian, Aryan, Teutonic, and Nordic) is the product of a long evolution established by God.

In 2013, GCHQ, the secret agency of the British Crown, put into writing and in a secret document something that is not a secret and, moreover, ended up being leaked: "*people do not make decisions based on reason but on emotion*." To then conclude: "*when on a social platform, individuals copy each other*." Based on these simple but unquestionable observations, the super agency in service of the queen and her subjects planned how to infiltrate dissident groups on social media. Two of the seven recommendations were: an "*infiltration operation*" and a strategy used for centuries:

"*false flag operation*." In modern terms, "organize an unjustified attack and attribute it to our enemies." Under the title "*Magic Techniques & Experiment*," the same document also acknowledged the importance of "*legitimizing violence*." All techniques later proven familiar to NSA employees[180]

Freedom of Expression Under Surveillance

SURVEILLANCE, REAL OR IMAGINED, is one of the greatest forces of censorship, as it is indirect censorship most of the time. That is, it is self-censorship. Self-censorship has the advantage of functioning like a virus that spreads without the need for a cohesive force and, over time, is defended by its own inoculated victims. This idea was already present in the *panopticon* of the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham, popularized in the late 17th century thanks to a law passed by the National Legislative Assembly of Paris and later promoted by the English government itself. Although the idea revolved around a prison construction where inmates could be observed at all times from a geometric center, the theoretical and ideological foundation lies in psychology, in the dynamics of the deepest emotions like fear, the same one applied today in supermarkets or private homes with fake surveillance cameras. It's the same technique of *uncertainty* that the Nazis applied in concentration camps and has been used in multiple other cases. No one can read the physical book I'm reading in a quiet corner of my house, but it's impossible to guarantee that the NSA or CIA doesn't already know I'm reading that book based on my purchases. What's far more likely, in my case, is that they're watching this very screen on which I, the author of this book, am writing while still connected to the internet. I suspect this not only because of various episodes where my computer's cursor moved on its own, quite logically, but also because the documents leaked in recent years prove it.

In some cases like mine, self-censorship is very ineffective. Secret agencies might explain it and categorize it as part of some syndrome the author suffers from. If before it was a moral struggle for justice, for freedom, and against the abuses of power, now it can be discredited with more scientific language like "Oppositional Defiant Disorder or ODD." Among the most common labels for troublesome dissidents like Julian Assange,

Chelsea Manning, and Edward Snowden are "narcissist" or something related to their sexuality. Bob Schieffer, the star journalist of CBS (ironically, on a program titled "*Face the Nation*"), tried to delegitimize Snowden's revelations, calling him a "*young narcissist who thinks he's smarter than all of us*" and comparing him to the risks Martin Luther King took when he stayed in the country after breaking the unjust laws of his time. To continue weaving the traditional media web, the powerful *Business Insider* headlined: "*Bob Schieffer of CBS Destroys Edward Snowden in 90 Seconds*."[181] Edward Snowden and Glenn Greenwald (the journalist who published the documents leaked by Snowden) were repeatedly labeled as "cowards" and "traitors," one for fleeing to Hong Kong and the other for moving to Brazil. The veteran CBS journalist didn't mention that Martin Luther King was pursued by the FBI and ultimately assassinated, like most leaders of the time, by "individuals unconnected to power."

At one of those gatherings of colleagues and a few strangers, one of those where (I've been told and read in the memoirs of retired manipulators) secret agents often go with a glass of whiskey in hand to talk about culture, a gentleman from Texas, an enthusiast of Central American history, asked me my opinion on Julian Assange and Edward Snowden. They know that few professors resist the temptation to give radical answers when someone enters their field of study. It also wasn't hard to know that in recent months I had bought several books on the topic, aside from my research at the National Archive. In just a few minutes, the man with the purple tie had reached the predictable point:

"*Have you noticed that they all have some psychological issue? Assange is a* womanizer (*womanizer*). *Snowden didn't even graduate from high school, despite his remarkable intelligence. Soldier Bradley Manning, later Chelsea Manning, revealed herself as a woman trapped in a man's body. Glenn Greenwald fell in love with a Brazilian man and moved there. I'm not saying being homosexual or transgender is bad, just that it's a common factor they all share. What does this psychological pattern mean*?."

"No, but…" At that moment, I remembered the persecution of blacks, gays, and lesbians that Senator Arthur McCarthy and the infamous FBI director, Edgar Hoover, had carried out during the Cold War, believing that blacks and homosexuals were prone to betraying their country and religion by sympathizing with the communist causes of justice and equality. At that time, in Cuba, they weren't much different with that

macho fear, persecuting homosexuals because "*the revolution doesn't enter through the ass*."[lxxvii]

"No, but…" At that moment, I remembered the persecution of blacks, gays, and lesbians that in the United States had been carried out by Senator Arthur McCarthy and the infamous FBI director, Edgar Hoover, during the Cold War, believing that blacks and homosexuals were prone to betraying their country and religion by sympathizing with the communist causes of justice and equality.

It's no coincidence that the puritanism of Victorian morality, based on sexual repression, and the police were invented at the same time in the 19th century, to control the promiscuity of wage-earning slaves who migrated from rural areas to the cities, crowding around factories. It is no coincidence that the modern method of police interrogation was inaugurated by the European Inquisition, not only through brutal practices like torture, but also by exploiting a puritanical culture that multiplies the possibilities of *moral extortion*. In the 20th century, intelligence agencies like the CIA and the FBI benefited from this neoconservative puritanism, surveilling and collecting private information, such as the sexuality of dissidents. When the powerful FBI director, Edgar Hoover, learned that Martin Luther King was to receive the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, he erupted in fury. Just as the CIA would later attempt to prevent Pablo Neruda from receiving the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1971, Hoover sought to discredit King by any means necessary. Since the revelation that the civil rights activist was a socialist did not seem sufficient, the FBI installed microphones in every hotel room King occupied, hoping that his weakness for women would end his marriage. The goal was not his marriage itself, but the knowledge that King suffered from depression, and it was assumed that a breakup with Coretta Scott would lead him to repeat the suicide attempts he had experienced in his adolescence.

In the case of John Lennon and other troublesome artists, the intimacy that could be used for their death—if not physical, then at least civil—was an alleged homosexuality that they never managed to uncover. For this reason, we can speculate, and surely in line with a patriarchal religious tradition, that sexual liberation movements represented a new

[lxxvii] A classic of Cuban and Latin American cinema, *Strawberry and Chocolate*(1993), by the giants of Cuban cinema Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabío, summarized this drama, which was later overcome to some extent.

vulnerability for those in power. If someone stops fearing that the world will find out they are gay or lesbian, then how can they be extorted with suddenly useless files? The battle to criminalize or stigmatize homosexuality was lost, but not, for example, the tactic of crucifying an individual for adultery.[lxxviii] It is no coincidence that, after the revolution of the 1960s, a strong neoconservative reaction was designed and implemented in the United States, which ultimately led to Ronald Reagan's presidency and inaugurated a long period of neoconservative morality, also no coincidence, aligned with the economic and financial elites entrenched in political, media, religious, and cultural power. It is no coincidence that the criminalization of drugs initiated by President Nixon explicitly aimed to criminalize marginalized groups, such as Black and Latino communities.[182] It is no coincidence that even civil violence (when it remains below a critical threshold where power begins to be questioned) is necessary and convenient for the *status quo* of power. Any violence that does not result in a successful revolution always benefits the reactionary forces in power.

In 2019 and beyond, the then-president of Brazil, Captain Jair Bolsonaro, repeatedly referred to Greenwald by alluding to his sexuality ("*Do you burn the donut*?") as a way to personally and ideologically discredit him, to which the American journalist responded by pointing out the president's clear anal fixation. After Snowden's revelations in 2013, Greenwald and his project *The Intercept* were also key in exposing the corruption of the Brazilian political system, from corrupt anti-corruption judges like Sergio Moro, who managed to imprison the then-favorite presidential candidate, Lula, to the most corrupt lawmakers who had years earlier impeached Dilma Rousseff under allegations of corruption.

Among the most common labels applied to troublesome dissidents like Julian Assange, Chelsea Manning, and Edward Snowden are "narcissist" or something related to a disability. Bob Schieffer, the star journalist of CBS (ironically, on a program titled "*Face the Nation*"), attempted to delegitimize Snowden's revelations, calling him a "*young narcissist who thinks he's smarter than all of us*" and comparing him to the risks taken by Martin Luther King, who stayed in the country after violating the unjust laws of his time. To continue weaving the traditional media web,

[lxxviii] On the contrary, the radicalization of "political correctness" promoted by its enemies, the progressive left, made it possible to turn the polygamous tendencies of part of the population into harassment, where an insinuation or an extra word became equivalent to sexual assault.

the powerful *Business Insider* headlined: "*Bob Schieffer of CBS Destroys Edward Snowden in 90 Seconds*." Edward Snowden and Glenn Greenwald (the journalist who published the documents leaked by Snowden) were repeatedly labeled as "cowards" and "traitors," one for fleeing to Hong Kong and the other for moving to Brazil. The veteran CBS journalist did not mention that Martin Luther King was pursued by the FBI and ultimately assassinated, like most leaders of the time, by "individuals not linked to power."

"*What does this psychological pattern mean to you, professor?*" insisted the man with the whiskey and lots of ice, whom I had never seen before but who had made it clear from the start that he was not a new professor.

"*To me, it means the world needs more gays, more trans people, and more autistic individuals*," was the only thing I could think to say, more to get rid of that man with such high self-esteem and feigned ignorance. It worked, for the moment.

A few years later, one of my most advanced students who had overheard the conversation stopped by my office to discuss details of the course she was taking and mentioned a study she had read on ethics and autism. The research, published in *The Journal of Neuroscience* in February 2021 by an international group of nine experts ("*Right Temporoparietal Junction Underlies Avoidance of Moral Transgression in Autism Spectrum Disorder*" [183]), conducted an experiment with two groups of people: one composed of individuals classified within the "autistic spectrum" and the other with people outside of it, or, in layman's terms, "normal people like us." Both groups were asked to donate a sum of money to organizations, one charitable (for the education of children and adolescents in Brazil) and the other allowing animal cruelty (the elimination of dogs and cats from the streets) in two different contexts: donations made with an audience and those made anonymously. In one case, a personal financial gain was offered for supporting animal cruelty. The computational model revealed that the group of autistic individuals did not accept this personal advantage at the expense of others' suffering, even when selecting the best option anonymously.

We can infer that this study not only dismantles the idea of the weak moral context evaluation of autistic individuals, which often leads them into social trouble, but also reveals the opposite: a moral sense superior to that of "normal people." That is, this normality would be nothing more than the adaptation of the environment to personal interests (corruption) and the manipulation of others' opinions, which ultimately

values them as "successful people," even though they should be in intense psychological treatment, were it not for a sick culture that protects, rewards, and applauds them.

That "normal people" are the ones in the economic and political power of countries. When David Miranda, Glenn Greenwald's husband, was passing through England, the secret services detained him and accused him of terrorism. A terrorist for being the partner of a terrorist, defined in the accusation as follows: "*Mr. Miranda knowingly carries material whose disclosure would endanger people's lives. Moreover, the disclosure, or threat of disclosure, is designed to influence a government and is carried out to promote a political or ideological cause. Therefore, this falls within the definition of terrorism*."

When secret agencies decide on secret, lethal, and devastating attacks in foreign territory, do they not endanger anyone's life? When they plant articles or spread false rumors, do they not shape opinion in mass media? Are they not trying to influence any government through Public Opinion? Parallel governments are never labeled as terrorists, according to their own elastic definitions of terrorism. It's the obvious way of thinking. They are in power; their powerful fictions are called reality and normality, not "mental problems."

The ideological police. The parallel government of the FBI

MORE THAN A PATTERN, THIS DISCREDITING of the messenger is a *déjà vu* of other historical leaks and the same demonization of their messengers. In 1971, military analyst Daniel Ellsberg, turned political activist, revealed what are now called the "*Pentagon Papers*," exposing the government's lies and the crimes against humanity perpetrated by U.S. forces in Vietnam. At the time, President Richard Nixon ordered Ellsberg to be spied on to reveal some sexual particularity, even if it was a preference for women, as was the case with Martin Luther King. The spies of that time raided the office of Ellsberg's psychologist, Dr. Lewis Fielding, in search of a crime that would damage his credibility and create public opinion favorable to the government.

Apparently, these cases would reveal the failure of espionage or the abuses of power in oversight within so-called Democratic States. But we must not confuse failures and fiascos with effectiveness. The effectiveness of self-censorship due to the suspicion of being watched, whether real or imagined, is not only effective, but the secret agencies themselves know it and promote it. In this sense, conspiracy theories against these agencies, even the most far-fetched ones, have a negative effect on the freedom of expression of dissidents. The secret oversight agencies know this, whether national or international. Let's take a basic example.

In 1971, when a group of eight dissidents raided an FBI office in Philadelphia and took a thousand classified documents, it became clear, among other things, that the FBI not only spied on dissident groups for their opposition to the Vietnam War, their skin color, or their sexual orientation, but also promoted the idea that everyone not under their radar should suspect they were being spied on and monitored. In 1975, professors Gregory White from the University of California and Philip Zimbardo from Stanford University published a study titled *The Chilling Effects of Surveillance: Deindividuation and Reactance* (*The Chilling Effects of Surveillance: Deindividuation and Reactance*), which showed the psychological effects of feeling spied on or monitored: groups that were informed their opinions might be shared with the police showed conservative responses on various topics.[lxxix 184]

What really matters is that the rest of the millions of citizens or foreigners feel they might be being watched and decide to tone down or simply self-censor their ideas and feelings. What could be more effective than that? After all, the vote of a paranoid writer is just one, and the rest count in the millions. In fact, the very feeling of paranoia is appreciated by these same secret agencies, because if a critical minority falls into the paranoia of being observed and monitored, it is no longer necessary to dedicate time and resources to observing and monitoring them, as the victimized miasma will take care of it. A document leaked during the same FBI office raid in 1971 (COINTELPRO, "counterintelligence") revealed that the creation of paranoia was not a side effect but a designed product: one tactic is to "*plan and increase paranoia among New Left groups by*

[lxxix] "Only 44 percent of the group that knew their answers were being recorded directly advocated for the legalization of marijuana, while 73 percent of the 'unrecorded' group recommended its legalization.

instilling fears that 'there is an FBI agent behind every mailbox.' Agents in the Philadelphia area are also instructed to monitor 'customers' of 'Afro bookstores' and recruit informants from the militant black movement."[185]

Only during the 1980s, the FBI accumulated 100,000 detailed files on "terrorism suspects," almost all of them human rights activists, subscribers to leftist publications, or immigrants who fled the brutal military dictatorships supported by Washington in Central America. According to journalist Ross Gelbspan,[lxxx] this information was used to characterize, demonize certain groups, and naturalize them as dangerous through articles funded by Washington and written by journalists who posed as independent, in addition to denying visas for conferences to experts and intellectuals with ideas contrary to those of the U.S. government. This operation was devised by the CIA director (and member of the fundamentalist Catholic group Order of Malta) William Casey and the CIA propaganda expert Walter Raymond Jr.[186] In 1981, President Ronald Reagan himself ordered the seizure of thousands of Cuban publications, not in the name of censorship but based on the prohibition of "doing business with the enemy," and shortly after signed the law "*Intelligence Identity Protection Act*," which sentenced anyone who revealed any name related to any illegal CIA activity to ten years of pressure.[187] Not by chance, the illegal funding of the terrorist group Contras in Nicaragua through the illegal sale of weapons to Iran was revealed by *Al-Shiraa*, a modest Lebanese newspaper, five years later.

In 1985, upon his return from a trip to Nicaragua where he had observed the elections and the process of the Sandinista revolution, journalist Edward Haase was detained by the FBI at Miami Airport and questioned for possible trafficking of subversive material. Haase wanted to know what this meant, and the agents (including José Miranda, who photocopied all the notes Haase had taken) explained to him that subversive material was understood as "*anything that promotes the violent overthrow of the U.S. government*."[188] Not without tragic irony, at that very moment the CIA was training and funding the Contras to overthrow the democratically elected government of Nicaragua, while Washington was blockading Cuba and financing dozens of other "friendly dictatorships," both before and after removing dozens of unwanted governments in its backyard and

[lxxx] Gelbspan was one of the first writers who, with his book *The Heat Is On* (1997), warned about the dangers of global warming.

across the world. If the law only applies to civilians, it is abundantly clear that it never applies to imperial powers.

During these same years, passport information and flight numbers of Central American dissidents collected by the FBI and business organizations were shared with the repressive forces of those countries. In almost all cases, the suspects had committed the crime of possessing "subversive literature." Among these dangerous groups were those who opposed the dictatorships supported by Washington, advocated for more resources for the U.S. military, or were against the proliferation of atomic weapons; or they supported feminists, gay rights, or any group fighting for their civil rights. When the ideological connection of a persecuted individual to one of these undesirable groups could not be established, it was invented.

In addition to para-businessmen, para-religions also played a significant role in ideological persecution. This was the case, for example, with the powerful and multimillion-dollar Moon Sect, known for its intense indoctrination, extensive tax evasion, its support for far-right groups (such as the terrorist Contras in Central America), and, according to Ross Gelbspan, also infamous for its methods of "brain reprogramming" *in its "anti-communist and anti-democratic" struggle.* One of its student organizations known as CARP was dedicated to gathering information on students and professors at over a hundred American universities. In El Salvador, they had worked to promote the dictator José Napoleón Duarte, just as the 700 Club did with the genocidal dictator of Guatemala, Efraín Ríos Montt.[lxxxi] In one of CARP's reports to the FBI, one can read a student's account of the public relations director of the student radio station at the University of California, Santa Barbara: "*Cory knows a lot about Marxism and sympathizes with the FDR* [Revolutionary Democratic Front of El Salvador]. *He tried to convince me that while the Soviet Union is present in Cuba (something he freely admitted), it has no involvement in El Salvador*."[189]

Other reports explicitly mention that their goal is to report to the FBI on the activities of students with leftist ideas. Cases of ideological persecution through the parallel state, thanks to the nearly unlimited

[lxxxi] Other groups that worked for the FBI, attempting to link any American leftist group to the Soviet Union, were also tasked with whitewashing and promoting the image of death squad leaders like Roberto d'Aubuisson, later president of El Salvador and founder of the neofascist ARENA party. Using words that Captain Jair Bolsonaro would later echo in Brazil, Roberto d'Aubuisson declared to the *Washington Post* (August 16, 1981) that if the left had come to power, they would have killed 100,000 people, and therefore "*peace in El Salvador will be achieved when 300,000 people are executed*".

resources derived from general taxes, have always been a tradition in the United States, a society proud of its democracy and freedom.

In 1987, part of the CIA and FBI campaign (partners in espionage and rivals for government funding) against political dissidents was revealed, carried out by mercenaries like Salvadoran Frank Varelli, who also pursued leftists in the United States while employed by the far-right group John Birch Society.[lxxxii] According to the fanatical realism of Varelli and the sects he belonged to, the communists "*are not coming, they are already here, and they are growing and growing; one day they will be so strong that they will take us to the parks and kill us all*." Naturally, in the United States, Varelli worked with the general responsible for the rape and murder of four American nuns in El Salvador (suspected of sympathizing with Liberation Theology) Carlos Eugenio Vides Casanova, who moved to Palm Coast, an hour from Jacksonville. From there, Vides Casanova, like the rest of the terrorists protected by the CIA in Miami, continued "fighting communism." His case did not end as well as that of other terrorists like Posada Carilles. After 25 years living in Florida, in 2015, along with José Guillermo García (former defense minister), he was finally deported to El Salvador for ordering the assassination of Spanish priest Oscar Romero and the four American nuns, tragedies that, like the massacre of Spaniard Ignacio Ellacuría and other Jesuits in 1989, will be remembered by the world. The 75,000 Salvadorans who suffered the same fate today are merely numbers, if not "*fake news*."

According to Varelli, the economic base of the Salvadoran far-right operations was in Miami. In 1987, Varelli testified and admitted before the Senate that the FBI acted in coordination with terrorist groups from El Salvador, targeting non-violent dissidents who arrived in the United States, entrapping them in conflicts with the IRS (Internal Revenue Service) or simply persecuting them as "communists." This series of testimonies was interrupted and blocked in the Senate itself by conservative groups. In a moment of dubious remorse, Varelli said in an interview with CBS: "*the law is meant to be applied to civilians*."[190] According to investigator Gelbspan, Varelli's operational base "*was in Miami, where several*

[lxxxii] Varelli, whose real name was Franklin Agustín Martínez Varela, was the son of an oligarch who worked in his country's government, but he failed to complete his military service in El Salvador and abandoned his Catholic education because his church "was full of communists," which led him, like the dictator Ríos Montt in Guatemala, to become a "Born Again" Baptist and self-proclaim himself as a pastor, reverend, and doctor.

Salvadoran businessmen were forming an organization with the dual purpose of disseminating propaganda and gathering intelligence on Salvadoran activists in El Salvador and the United States."[191]

Certain crucial questions will always linger, questions that few or no one in the mainstream media or the master narratives of hegemonic (if not imperial) powers ever ask: with the great threat (real, imagined, or both) of the Cold War gone, where did all that multi-billion-dollar machinery and that multi-paranoid culture go? Into Huntington's new theory of "The Clash of Civilizations"? Into 9/11? Perhaps the biggest clue lies in the 1998 publication of the conservative group Project for the New American Century, PNAC: to achieve the goal of redesigning the Middle East with the approval of American public opinion, it was necessary "*a catalytic and catastrophic event, something like a new Pearl Harbor*." Also to justify the multi-billion-dollar budgets of the FBI, the CIA, the NSA, and the convenient paranoia that has been repeating itself since the seizure of indigenous lands in the 18th century in the same way: (1) "we were attacked first, for no reason," (2) "we had to defend ourselves," (3) "we will never forget." The CIA, for example, in its entire history, came close to disappearing twice: once by a signature from President John F. Kennedy after the fiasco of the invasion of Cuba in 1962 and again after the end of the Cold War. It did not disappear. Those who disappeared were others.

When journalist Clare Boothe Luce asked Lyndon B. Johnson why he had agreed to be Kennedy's number two, the veteran Johnson and later president replied: "*one in four presidents died in office… and I'm a gambler, my dear*." The response might have been an irrelevant anecdote, but it describes a culture from within political power.

The parallel government of the NSA and the CIA

IN HIS 1904 ADDRESS TO CONGRESS, President Theodore Roosevelt delivered his own corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, 80 years later: "*Chronic wrongdoing [in Latin American countries], as elsewhere, may require intervention by some civilized nation… In the Western Hemisphere, the adherence of the*

United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force us, however reluctantly, to exercise an international police power."[192]

The slaveholder's obsession with keeping Indians, Blacks, Mexicans, and white workers under control did not end with the defeat of the Confederacy in 1865 but successfully mutated into the new imperialist capitalism according to which "*the democracy of this century needs no further justification for its existence than the simple fact that it has been organized so that the white race may keep the best lands of the New World*."[193] But the racial factor always hides an even more powerful element: power, in our world based on capital, private property, and the seizure and accumulation of wealth produced by a country and the rest of the world. James Madison, one of the so-called Founding Fathers of the United States, those sacred figures of this country's secular religion, summed it up quite clearly in a discussion that took place during the drafting of the sacred constitution: the goal of our government must be "*the protection of the wealthy minority against the majority of the people*." In line with what another founding father and second president, John Adams, expressed: "*the owners of this country must govern it*."[194] In fact, his vice president and later third president wrote that both Adams and Washington preferred a monarchy to a democracy.[195] In the end, American democracy and the British monarchy would hardly differ in almost anything. Not even in the colors of their flags. The forms and resources have changed since then. Not the actual practice.

For this dominant ideology, wage workers (later, regardless of their skin color) are dangerous to progress and freedom. Projected beyond borders (as has been the case since the founding of this country in 1776), the idea that a civilized nation has the right and duty to "*exercise an international police power*" will be silenced in generations to come (like the ideological lexicon of *imperialism*), but its practice will continue, to this day, in increasingly sophisticated and powerful forms. Just as the racist and classist values of the Confederate slaveholders were hidden in the closet after World War II against the Nazis, so too did the vindication of the empire of the superior race and civilized nations become discursive taboos, but they never disappeared. Similarly, this idea of "international policing" became politically incorrect while, especially after 1945, it became the primary policy of the parallel state.

Although after the creation of the CIA in 1947 the FBI's legal jurisdiction was limited to U.S. territory, its agents and private mercenaries made it possible for its actions to extend beyond, to other countries.

Something similar happened with the CIA: free to act across the world, with the exception of the United States, it has always managed to have its private mercenaries extend their reach within national territory (or through the network of Anglo-Saxon nations *Five Eyes*, thanks to which one intelligence service spied on the citizens of other countries that, by law, each could not do against its own citizens).

As is well known, one of the biggest revelations of these practices came from the investigations of the U.S. Senate's Church Committee and the House of Representatives' Pike Committee in 1975. Although then-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger did not cooperate with these investigations or when he was called to testify before Congress, he did acknowledge to President Gerald Ford that the CIA had spied on, pursued, recorded, and conducted illegal raids on groups and individuals of left-leaning intellectuals and journalists within the national territory. According to Kissinger himself, some CIA actions "*were clearly illegal*" and others "*can be considered deeply immoral*," he acknowledged verbally, but refused to put any of this in writing.[196] Of course, in any case, none of this matters for legal purposes. CIA agents and officers acknowledged in their memoirs their own and others' crimes, all confirmed by declassified documents with their names censored by the famous black bar. A president like Nixon can resign over a scandal (and later be pardoned by his own vice president), but in the parallel government, things don't go that far. When an officer is forced to resign, it's not because they did something wrong but because they didn't do it well, as demonstrated by the memoirs of David Atlee Phillips in *The Night Watch*, among others. When, at the end of the 1970s, public outrage began to rise beyond the expected limits of any tide and Americans voted for the most leftist Congress in history, governments passed laws to confirm their impunity, as was the case with the "*Intelligence Identity Protection Act*" of 1982.

In 2013, PEN America published a study with a similar title that sums it all up: *Chilling effects: NSA surveillance drives U.S. writers to self-censor* (*Chilling Effects: NSA Surveillance Drives U.S. Writers to Self-Censor*). One-fifth of writers have avoided addressing sensitive topics because they feel spied on. The same report reveals that only 12 percent of U.S. writers approve of mass surveillance under the guise of the fight against terrorism, while half the population agrees.[197]

As if this weren't enough, in 2017, just days before leaving the White House, President Barack Obama delivered the final blow to the

limitation of the CIA's ability to operate within U.S. territory when he legalized the NSA's practice of sharing secret and private information of any American citizen *at will* with the other fifteen secret agencies under its umbrella.[198] All in the name of National Security and for the sake of the hundreds of millions of citizens being spied on.

Of course, despite the tens of thousands of dollars spent each year, the power of these super-secret agencies is not absolute. The country they attempt to hijack in the name of the nation is too complex, and it's impossible to imprison thousands, let alone millions of dissenters, no matter how minoritarian they may be, in a traditional prison. Thus, the solution is to keep the majority in a state of obedience and militant complicity (all in the name of freedom, security, God, and country) and the critical minority in a state of fear.

In his book *No Place To Hide* (2014), journalist and investigator Glenn Greenwald recounts that his friend, documentary filmmaker Laura Poitras, was systematically detained and interrogated by airport security every time she arrived in the United States (an experience I share).[199] Until Greenwald published an article in *Solon* detailing this government harassment.[200] Since then, Poitras has not been detained at an airport again. The idea of making abuse of the law public often works, but not in all cases. Not in cases where people who are not citizens of this country are violently and systematically suppressed.

The idea that only authoritarian governments without an electoral system similar to Western democracies are dictatorships stems from the American tradition, founded on distrust of the tyranny of King George III, then head of the British Empire.

The Thirteen Colonies had to organize themselves into a confederation of relatively independent states, ensuring a certain freedom of expression, which was guaranteed in the First Amendment of the Constitution itself. Needless to say, for at least a couple of centuries (and then, until today in a very limited way), this constitutional right did not extend to Native Americans, enslaved Black people, or poor whites. Much less to rebels, who paid for this constitutional exercise with their lives, in public lynchings or with a hundred well-deserved lashes that taught Black people to be good Black people, Native Americans to be peaceful, and Mexicans and "peaceful Blacks" from beyond to work instead of taking a siesta. The new political organization had more in common with feudalism than with European absolutism: landowning lords with special rights,

independent of a central government and "free" to enslave and displace the ill-born, that is, the majority. This form of private freedom, the freedom of the master, the landowner, the wealthy banker, the brotherhoods, and transnational corporations, was modernized with the ideas and narratives of liberalism.

Due to the fragmented nature of the Thirteen Colonies, the need for the opposite became fossilized, the obsession with *union* while establishing a rotating, though not democratic, government. For ideological reasons inherited from the Enlightenment, that narrative umbrella could not be a religion, although it continued to be the same God of the Middle Ages, with some ethical changes, such as those brought about by Protestantism. The new white democracy, apparently founded on the ideas of the Enlightenment from the radical European philosophers, was far less democratic than the centuries-old confederation of Iroquois tribes (or the League of Six Nations)[lxxxiii]. Other Native peoples practiced more democratic, less patriarchal, and more equitable forms of governance than the Europeans. Even examples of European democracy were limited to small groups, such as in the case of communal lands or ships like the Maine (beyond the myth) and even pirate ships, despite their command hierarchy suggesting otherwise. Very large societies lost contact with their pharaohs, emperors, and kings, who managed to unify them under an authoritarian or absolutist system. However, new forms of communication and historical experience today make possible a form of unity (of laws, of principles) not through the imposition of a totem, a belief, or an ideology but through the acceptance of diversity, in the recognition of the equality of natural rights.

But freedom of speech was only for white people, and the right to bear arms "to defend freedom" did not extend to Black people; on the contrary, it aimed to keep them enslaved. From its founding until the ratification of the 14th Amendment, when enslaved Black people were

[lxxxiii] The Iroquois League ("Great League of Peace," founded in 1142 and composed of various Native American tribes) is the oldest participatory democracy on the planet, based on the pursuit of peace and the redistribution of wealth. Although he was well aware of it, Benjamin Franklin barely mentioned it in 1754 as an example to follow, and its influence on the new "democracy" faded into the oblivion of white history. The Iroquois accepted displaced peoples and adopted those defeated in their wars. Although some prisoners could be forced to work, they were not bound by their race and were often adopted by established families. The 13 arrows held by the eagle in the U.S. coat of arms come from an Iroquois metaphor: it is easier to break arrows separately than together.

recognized as citizens and as human beings, the United States was a perfect dictatorship, calling itself a "democracy."

Once the powerful slaveholders of the South were defeated in the Civil War (powerful due to their disproportionate influence in Congress, the vast fortunes they amassed through slavery, and a racial and religious fanaticism that persists to this day), they were replaced by the growing power of corporations. The most powerful businessmen continued the practices of exploitation, dehumanization, and wealth concentration of the slaveholders, except that by the late 19th century, slaves were replaced by wage laborers, who were similarly demonized as dangerous individuals seeking to subvert the order of God, according to which freedom, civilization, and progress exist thanks to those at the top.

Unlike personalist dictatorships or civic-military juntas, liberal democracies generally accept what is summarized in the United States in the First Amendment. Thanks to this first article of the *Bill of Rights*, the right to express an opinion is protected from the threat of imprisonment. This is no small thing. Naturally, the limitations on this right and the resources of power to restrict this basic right of the lower classes are numerous. One form of cultural and ideological control and harassment is to accuse those who speak freely and are not beholden to special interests. I cannot say this is the case for all professors, for example, but they have certainly been a preferred target of ideological harassment in the United States. Not infrequently, right-wing politicians have attempted to legislate academic freedom. A few years ago, a legislator from Georgia, a proponent of the Creation of the Universe in seven days and annoyed by the Theory of Evolution, proposed passing laws that would require professors to "teach facts, not theories," as if the idea of the Creation of the Universe in seven days were not a theory, despite lacking any evidence or proof beyond faith.

Not infrequently, students have asked me why professors tend to be left-leaning (*liberals*). It's true; even in the United States, one only needs to look at the electoral map during each election to see university campuses as small islands of the left surrounded by conservative seas. This observation has almost no exceptions. The answer is simple: first, because for centuries, one only needs to look at which side of the ideological spectrum most independent intellectuals and non-commercial cultural figures are on, and then look to the opposite side to see where social, economic, and ideological power lies. The second reason is even simpler: if someone loves money, they will undoubtedly not dedicate themselves to research and

intellectual production, from the sciences to the humanities, investing hours and decades in unpaid, irrelevant, or nearly irrelevant work for their salary.

That is why, as real power has repeatedly failed to dominate and control this area as well, the solution is to accuse them of being dangerous radicals, fools manipulated by some philosopher who died one or two centuries ago. Or to directly and unabashedly encourage the recording of professors' classes to detect "ideological leanings," as if those who control and monitor were ideologically neutral, as has been the case with President Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis in the United States.

It was precisely for this reason that in the 1930s, a system of "*tenure*" was established in American universities to protect professors from potential punishment for saying what they think or publishing their research without hesitation. For a professor to achieve *tenure*, they must meet several academic requirements, such as being selected through national competition and maintaining a certain record of academic activity for several years. Once *tenure* is achieved, through the vote of various committees and the faculty assembly, the recipient can only be dismissed for ethical or moral reasons (plagiarism, a romantic relationship with a student, etc.)

For example, at the university where I currently work, its constitution (*Bylaws*), in its chapter on "Academic Freedom," explicitly states:

"Through this article, the academic freedom of academic members is explicitly guaranteed. Jacksonville University adopts the following parts taken verbatim from the 1940 AAUP Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, a reaffirmation of the principles first established in 1925: The purpose of this statement is to promote public understanding and support of academic freedom […] Institutions of higher education are conducted for the common good and not to advance the interest of the individual teacher or the institution as a whole. The common good depends upon the free search for truth and its free exposition.

Academic freedom is essential to these purposes and applies to both teaching and research. Freedom in research is fundamental to the advancement of truth. Academic freedom in its teaching aspect is fundamental for the protection of the rights of the teacher in teaching and of the student to freedom in learning. It carries with it duties correlative to rights. Tenure is a means to certain ends, for (1) the freedom of teaching and research and of extramural activities,

and (2) a sufficient degree of economic security to make the profession attractive to capable men and women. Freedom and economic security, hence, effectiveness, are indispensable to the success of an institution in fulfilling its obligations to its students and to society […]

University teachers are citizens, members of a profession, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations."[201]

That is, for there to be real freedom of opinion, the individual, whether academic or not, must not only not fear prison or persecution for their ideas but also *the individual must not lose their job or have their salary used as a tool of pressure and self-censorship*.

As any reader can realize at this point, few other professions, such as Supreme Court justices, have this guarantee of *tenure*, which is why the institution of *tenure* in American universities is under attack and the universities that offer it tend to shrink.

Also, for this reason, it is often professors (at least those free from the overwhelming weight of propaganda and social mythology) who most frequently express their opinions freely. Not by chance, they are one of those groups most attacked as "radicals" by the rest of society, which consumes and is educated primarily through the mainstream press and the products of the cultural industry.

The private industry of smear campaigns and intimidation is a policy of governments with powerful secret agencies and is also a private business. The most frequent clients of these companies are powerful politicians and other private companies with extortion power in their noble fight for "free enterprise" and "free competition." Though little known, the business of pursuing political adversaries or independent dissidents is a multi-billion-dollar industry. Not by chance, these private corporations share the same ideology as the government's secret agencies, though the austerity policies of governments always reach those at the bottom; never the corporations or the secret agencies, the true "invisible hand of the market."[lxxxiv]

[lxxxiv] Beyond a historical pattern that is easily revealed in every intervention by government intelligence agencies since their creation, there are economic reasons. According to intelligence expert Tim Shorrock, "*70% of the intelligence agencies' budget is spent on private companies*", which, located just a few miles from the NSA headquarters, are "*the largest*

This tactic of smearing others is an old acquaintance among CIA and NSA agents. To mention a recent example derived from the revelations of former employee of both agencies, Edward Snowden, the surveillance focused on various aspects of citizens' private lives, such as their internet searches and any viewing of adult pages related to sex or any overly sensual chat with someone who was not their official partner, information always ready to destroy the reputation of any dissident at the right moment.[lxxxv] A kind of "Extortion Bank," sponsored by Bourgeois Morality and capitalized by Everlasting Imperialism.

However, the right to privacy was already debated and recognized a thousand years ago by medieval theologians, many of whom agreed that one is responsible for their actions, not their desires. Individual privacy, that which does not affect others in a criminal manner, is a right. In the book *Everybody Lies* (*Everyone Lies,* 2017), Stephens-Davidowitz examines the results of Big Data analyses on pornography consumption. According to the author, women consume twice as many videos featuring physical violence against women as men do. Does this mean that these women (or women in general) are more in favor of sexual violence against women than men? To say yes would be the same as claiming that fans of detective novels or mystery films are criminals in fact or in potential. However, the collection of an individual's or a group's data could be used against them in any eventuality, whether in court or through illegal extortion by a secret agency, something that has a long history of impunity.

The same has been and continues to be practiced to discredit or simply punish the founder of WikiLeaks, Julian Assange, for daring to reveal major crimes of the empire. Not only was his confinement in London filmed in search of a private moment to extort him, but also "*the human network supporting WikiLeaks*" was subjected to the same type of espionage.[202] Sometimes resorting to the primitive technique (also used by teenage hackers for mere fun) of flooding an activist's or dissident's internet

---

concentration of cyber power in the world". Although the annual budget is secret even from most U.S. congressmen, it is estimated to exceed 60 billion dollars.

[lxxxv] One of the leaked documents reveals the targeting of Muslims not suspected of terrorism and the general recommendation to "*view sexually explicit material online or use sexually explicit persuasive language when communicating with inexperienced youth*". BBC. (2013). "NSA planned to discredit radicals over web-porn use": https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-25118156

access with digital garbage, making their work slow or impossible. Another common technique is "*erasing their presence on the internet*."[203] This closely resembles the revealed promotional practices of functional writers and the marginalization of troublesome dissidents by the CIA during the Cold War.

But the private industry of smear and intimidation is also a private business. The most frequent clients of these companies are powerful politicians and other private companies with extortion power in their noble fight for "free enterprise" and "free competition." Although little known, the business of pursuing political adversaries or independent dissidents is a multi-million dollar industry. Not coincidentally, these private corporations share the same ideology as the government's secret agencies, although the austerity policies of governments always affect those at the bottom; never the corporations or the secret agencies, the true "invisible hand of the market."

Not coincidentally, this resource is always exercised from the top down, especially on those at the bottom who may represent an obstacle or a danger to their interests, such as critics, researchers, and independent journalists.

In June 2022, it was revealed that the young journalist Nate Monroe of the Times Union in Jacksonville, Florida, had been surveilled and photographed by a consulting firm from Alabama, whose slogan is "*We solve problems*." A photograph made public shows him talking with his girlfriend in the backyard of his home. Monroe's sin was doing decent investigative work on the attempted privatization of Jacksonville's giant electric utility, JEA, which was later revealed to be a deliberate and corrupt plan by its own directors, applying the old strategy of the neoliberal recipe: making a public company inefficient so that public opinion supports its sale to efficient private entities. Once again, the invisible hand of the market.

A few months earlier, the former executives of the public company, Aaron Zahn and Ryan Wannemacher, had been charged with conspiracy but were released after posting a $100,000 bail each. The idea of the former directors, according to the *Dayly Record* of Jacksonville, was to receive several million dollars if they succeeded in privatizing the public company, valued at over $11 billion. [204]

According to the information revealed by the *Florida Times Union*, acknowledged by the Alabama company itself, the file on Monroe consists

of 72 pages and includes "*his financial history, political affiliation, the names and phone numbers of his relatives and neighbors, his Social Security number, the make of his car, his driver's license numbers, his car's license plate, and the places he has lived since childhood*."[205]

The journalism instructor at the University of Florida, editor for the Associated Press, and Pulitzer Prize winner, Ted Bridis, told the press that "*it's truly un-American to be spying on journalists*." It doesn't matter that we know the NSA reads and listens to millions of messages every year.[lxxxvi] Whenever a case of corruption or questionable morality is revealed in this country, it's labeled as *un-American*, regardless of whether it's a tradition with a history spanning a couple of centuries.

Once the powerful slaveholders of the South were defeated in the Civil War (powerful due to their disproportionate influence in Congress, their vast fortunes built on slavery, and a racial and religious fanaticism that persists to this day), they were replaced by the growing power of corporations. The most powerful businessmen continued the practices of exploitation, dehumanization, and wealth concentration of the slaveholders, except that by the late 19th century, slaves were replaced by wage workers, who were similarly demonized as dangerous individuals seeking to subvert God's order, according to which freedom, civilization, and progress exist thanks to those at the top.

Unlike personalist dictatorships or civic-military juntas, in liberal democracies, what is summarized in the First Amendment in the United States is generally accepted. Thanks to this first article of the *Bill of Rights*, the right to express an opinion is protected from the threat of ending up in jail. That's no small thing. Naturally, the limitations on this right and the resources of power to restrict this basic right of those at the bottom are numerous.

Journalists, no matter how good they are, are constrained by the editorial lines of the media they work for, which, in turn, are influenced by their clients—no longer the readers they once depended on almost exclusively, but the big advertisers, who, naturally, subscribe to a specific class ideology. The renowned journalist Seymour Hersh suggested that, to restore the true mission of journalism (to inform independently, to challenge power), the first thing to do would be to shut down the news offices

[lxxxvi] In fact, after denying it, it was revealed that the NSA intercepts 75% of communications in the United States alone. (*WSJ*; *Reuters*, August 20, 2013.)

of NBC and ABC, fire 90 percent of publication editors, and return to the fundamental work of journalists as outsiders. "*Problematic journalists don't get promoted*," he concluded.[206]

Rebels, dissidents, or simply inconvenient investigators are the natural targets of the machinery of power. Their most common tools (before persecution and imprisonment, as in the cases of Julian Assange and Edward Snowden) are harassment and discrediting. But democracy, freedom of expression, and the less recognized "right to the truth" do not exist because of the concentrated powers but in spite of them; they do not exist in spite of the rebels and dissidents but because of them.

Propaganda and Censorship in the "Free World"

IN 1963, PROFESSOR BERNARD COHEN coined his most famous phrase: "*The press may not be very good at telling people what to think, but it is very effective at telling them what to think about*."[207]

There has always been a love triangle between the three P's: Power, Politics, and Propaganda. Historically, power has always ensured the capture of the "narrative centers," such as ecclesiastical sermons in their time. Ironically, these unifying centers of power needed division, an enemy, usually a malignant minority trying to destroy the existence and divine goodness of the majority, which was presented and represented as the victim. One doesn't need to be a seer to see that this was the strategy of Nazism in 1930s Germany. But nothing very different happened before and after this now-classic example of evil. Democracies (we're always referring to electoral-representative systems) also needed this exercise of flattering "us" and demonizing "them." Self-victimization and the creation of an enemy have always been two constants for unleashing the basest instincts in any society in any historical period.

One of the greatest propaganda and public opinion manipulation machines came from the so-called "leader of the free world," Washington. In the name of press freedom, the CIA infiltrated and manipulated the press and culture in the United States and on other continents, such as Latin America. As just one example, it's enough to mention the intense

campaign of interference in the Chilean press before the coup that overthrew the democratically elected president Salvador Allende in 1973.[208]

Naturally, this regional practice was part of a global logic. To discredit socialists in Latin America, even if they were indigenous groups fighting for their ancestral culture of communal production and consumption, it was necessary to launch massive campaigns of white propaganda and black propaganda. Both forms of propaganda were well-known to all secret agencies. An example of the former was the pamphlets distributed in the 1960s by the KGB in several African countries detailing the mistreatment of Black people in the United States. There wasn't much to invent, but white propaganda is tasked with amplifying reality. Much earlier (limiting ourselves to the Cold War), shortly after Germany's defeat in World War II, the CIA had begun a broad and diverse plan of cooperation with the defeated Nazis.

In 1948, the historian and publicist Rainer Hildebrandt and the pastor Ernst Tillich of the KgU ("Fighting Group Against Inhumanity") created *Graveyard* (the CIA's codename) with the goal of tracking down former Nazi prisoners in Soviet prisons to give lectures and testimonies in Western countries, something that was supported by the CIA. The witnesses received a salary of one hundred dollars a month (equivalent to $4,000 in today's value). Their testimonies were published by the New York Times, which took and published the numbers invented by Hildebrandt as a revelation: "*the Russians have sent 250,000 Germans to concentration camps since the war ended and more than 100,000 have died*."[209] Shortly after, 100,000 pamphlets were distributed monthly in the German Democratic Republic alone to incite uprisings and consolidate an anti-Soviet narrative. It's not hard to imagine the sentiment of millions of Germans who, just two or three years earlier, had been fervent Nazis against their greatest enemy, the communists and the Soviet Union. The communist Stasi responded in kind, dropping pamphlets that revealed the origins and practices of the KgU, supported by the CIA and Ford. By the 1950s, the KgU was receiving $70,000 ($770,000 in 2022 value) monthly from Ford and the CIA, even though the Soviet war prison camps had already been dismantled.[210]

Aside from the fact that several young Germans inspired by the CIA's pamphlets ended up in communist prisons accused of sabotage, the effectiveness of propaganda, both white and black, has made it possible for people to repeat unquestionable figures to this day, such as the claim

that Marx and communism are responsible for the deaths of one hundred million people, not to mention the larger numbers who died directly due to the grace of capitalist imperialism. In fact, from 1960 to 1990, the number of victims of Washington and the CIA in Latin America alone exceeded those who suffered repression from Moscow in its backyard, that is, the satellite countries of the Soviet Union.[211]

Another classic censorship mechanism of the Free World is labor extortion, which is why the precarization of work not only aims to reduce costs and maximize profits but also to exert political and ideological control.

Let's take a few examples among many in a brief period of two years. In 1996, the *San José Mercury News* published an investigation by journalist Gary Webb on the CIA's ties to drug trafficking and its connections to the market in U.S. cities. Humiliated by the scale of an investigation carried out by a modest journalist at a minor newspaper, the major national outlets like the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Washington Post* reacted by attacking the California paper. The *Mercury News* gave in to the pressures, retracted the report, and fired the journalist in charge of the investigation. After subsequent investigations, not only was Webb's report confirmed, but it was shown to be, in the words of Robert McChesney, "*the tip of the iceberg*."[212] Pressured by the Black Caucus, the CIA had to address the allegations and at no point denied the facts published by Webb. As Chesney himself summarizes, although the CIA itself confirmed its ties to drug trafficking throughout the 1980s, the mainstream press maintained a significant silence about the scandal.

Also in 1996, Roberta Baskin, a well-known consumer rights reporter for CBS, conducted an investigation into labor abuses by Nike in Vietnam. Shortly after, during the 1998 Winter Olympics, Baskin criticized the use of the Nike logo by a reporter and was stripped of her promotions and career advancements.

In 1997, Tampa journalists Steve Wilson and Jane Akre lost their jobs over an investigation into Monsanto. "*Akre and Wilson had been working for months on a series of reports about a controversial growth hormone injected into dairy cows, and the reports were scheduled to air starting February 24, 1997. On the eve of the first broadcasts, the reports were canceled after Monsanto contacted Fox Television, the parent company of WTVT-13. WTVT management reviewed the reports, found no errors, and rescheduled the broadcasts. But Monsanto's lawyers sent a written threat to the head of Fox's news division,*

and the investigation's findings were postponed again. Akre and Wilson were ordered to rewrite the story with false information over 80 times, none of which were accepted."[213] The journalists were fired.

In 1998, the *Cincinnati Enquirer* conducted an extensive investigation into the infamous Chiquita Brands International and its violations of ethical and legal standards in its international business practices.[lxxxvii] According to media expert Robert McChesney, the level of the investigation made its authors strong candidates for the Pulitzer Prize. To silence the investigation, Chiquita filed a lawsuit over the allegedly illegal use of a recorded phone message. Ultimately, the newspaper chose to pay Chiquita ten million dollars and not publish the investigation. The journalist was fired from his job.

In 2005, the prison outside all national and international laws at Guantánamo was criticized by various organizations, including Amnesty International.[lxxxviii] Before admitting that it was all a farce, though hidden behind the excuse of having received "incorrect information," President Bush and the lobby he belonged to did everything possible to manipulate the media to justify their crimes against humanity. According to reports from the *New York Times*, for this task in the media, retired military personnel in service to the Pentagon were employed, many of whom had connections to private military contractors. The *NYT* journalist, David Barstow, discovered that these same analysts with financial interests in the war appeared on television channels analyzing the invasion of Iraq. The Society of Professional Journalists asked NBC News to cut ties with one particular officer, retired General Barry McCaffrey, to "*restore the integrity of its reporting on military-related issues, including the war*." The NYT concluded that "*two of NBC's most prominent analysts, Barry R. McCaffrey and the late Wayne A. Downing, were part of the advisory board of the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq, an advocacy group created with White House support in 2002 to support the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. Both also had their own consulting firms and served on the boards of major military contractors*."[214]

[lxxxvii] In *La frontera salvaje* (2021), we address the role of this company from the coups d'état in Latin America, long before Guatemala 1954, its political manipulation of the press in collaboration with the CIA, to its most recent funding of terrorist groups in Colombia.

[lxxxviii] The existence of Guantánamo (the place where human rights are violated in Cuba) and the many other secret CIA prisons around the world is due to the fact that they are not on U.S. territory, and the wonderful laws of "*The Land of Laws*" do not apply there.

That same year, that same president paid some journalists thousands of dollars to write favorably about his proposals. According to *USA Today*, hundreds of thousands of dollars were funneled by the White House to right-wing journalists Armstrong Williams, Maggie Gallagher, and Michael McManus (Williams admitted to receiving $241,000) to write positively about the president's program, called *No Child Left Behind*.[215]

The same thing happened that year, in 1998, with a CNN investigation that led to the exposure of the likely use of nerve gas (sarin) by the U.S. military in Vietnam. CNN succumbed to pressure and aborted a yearlong investigative journalism project. The lead investigators, April Oliver and Jack Smith, refused to resign and were fired. As summarized by the award-winning public radio (NPR) journalist with 60 years of professional experience, Daniel Schorr, "*good journalism is criminalized or made dangerous for its best practitioners. Take on a government agency like the CIA, or a Fortune 500 member like Chiquita, or the conduct of the armed forces in Southeast Asia, and you'll find yourself in serious trouble, exposed, and often alone*."[216] This rule was confirmed multiple times, as in 2013 when Edward Snowden revealed the NSA's massive illegal surveillance program. Bob Schieffer of CBS attempted to delegitimize Snowden's revelations by calling him a "*narcissistic young man who thinks he's smarter than all of us*."[217]

The same logic of big business against the truth operates in many other countries, even in communist nations like China. In 2012, Bloomberg News had published an article on the fortunes of the Chinese elite, and shortly after, journalist Mike Forsythe sought to deepen this investigation. In 2014, to avoid losing the favor and privilege of the Chinese government to do business in the country, the news network aborted the investigation. When Mike Forsythe's wife (Leta Hong Fincher, also a journalist) began to speak out, Bloomberg tried to silence her. In October 2013, when Mike Bloomberg was mayor of New York, Bloomberg's editor, Matthew Winkler, held a private conference attended by top news executives in New York and the same investigative team based in China. According to the audio of that meeting obtained by NPR, the investigation "*will surely provoke the Communist Party to, you know, shut us down completely and expel us from the country… For this simple reason, I don't see the investigation*

as justified."[218] Forsythe was fired for leaking part of his own investigation.[lxxxix]

As if the censorship of investigative journalism wasn't enough, in every case, the bad example had to be crucified to discourage true independence, not just of a media outlet but of its most troublesome journalists.

Unlike personalist dictatorships or civic-military juntas, in liberal democracies, direct censorship is not the norm. More efficient than direct censorship is indirect censorship, that is, self-censorship. One of the most notable cases of inverse censorship occurred in the 17th century with the publication of the essays of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, which served as proof of her boldness as a woman against the authority of the church.

The power of self-censorship was practiced in all Latin American dictatorships, as was the case in Chile. At a certain point, the books to be published were no longer read by an army of tired and bored censors, and a more effective method was established: publishers became "free to publish at will," as long as they didn't publish anything against the government. If they did, the authorities would shut down their business. As in the story by Emilia Pardo Bazán, a nonexistent bullet destroyed the young wife of the old jailer. Publishers began to strangle their catalog of books that said anything about anything, just in case. "*Self-censorship operates through the fear of repression, which in the case of the media translates into closures and confiscation of entire editions, fines, or the threat of media confiscation, and in the case of individuals, into lawsuits, imprisonment, or dismissal, and even anonymous death threats. The journalists most resistant to self-censorship have been intimidated by having dismembered cats or fish thrown at their homes or by being beaten. Often, self-censorship begins at the source of information, that is, with the person giving an interview or information; it continues with the journalist who must write or disseminate it, and then with their bosses in the media. In the end, it is published completely mutilated or not published at all*."[219]

In the so-called "Free World," censorship has taken on multiple variations, such as the manipulation of private media by secret agencies of

[lxxxix] Of course, we could go on with the journalists killed in Mexico, with the well-known Palestinian-American reporter Shireen Abu Akleh, assassinated by Israeli military police and whose case the Israeli government refused to investigate, with the journalist Jamal Khashoggi, assassinated in Turkey by order of the Saudi crown, etc. All with the relative complicity of Western powers, but these cases go beyond the focus of this book.

democratic governments, the economic extortion of major advertisers or donors, the flooding of propaganda, distractions, or selective focuses on reality, and, more recently and openly, the establishment of social taboos represented by "cancel culture."

Recently, in Chicago, high school teacher Mary DeVoto lost her job for uttering the "N-word" ("*the N-word*") while attempting to analyze the history of this country. Hannah Berliner Fischthal, an instructor at Queens Catholic University for twenty years, was fired for reading a paragraph from the anti-racist novel *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, written by Mark Twain, one of the founders of the Anti-Imperialist League and the greatest literary celebrity of his time. The paragraph included *the* word. "It was very painful to hear the word," one of the students complained, infantilized and hypersensitive in the wrong way, like many of their generation. The same has happened to history teachers, such as Professor Phillip Adamo of Augsburg University in Minnesota, who was suspended for reading a paragraph from a book by the famous Black intellectual and activist James Baldwin.

Anyone who has studied the original sources of this country's history, the United States (so addicted to sugarcoated myths), has encountered that, *the word*, in the most derogatory way possible, in the mouths of the most powerful men of the 19th and 20th centuries. Now, quoting speeches in Congress, articles in newspapers, and letters from national heroes in their original version has become dangerous, which is why self-censorship, the most effective form of censorship imaginable, works perfectly.

Of the racism in today's American society and the racism on steroids of its genocidal wars in the name of freedom, not a word.

What could be more effective than the infantilization of new generations to avoid facing reality? I warn my students on the first day of class: "If there's anyone here whose sensitivity doesn't allow them to face the disgusting truths of history, please leave the course and don't waste our time." But I no longer say *the word*, just in case. It's not worth losing the war over trying to win a lost battle.

In the "free press," the most subtle and effective form, aside from self-censorship, lies in repetition vs. exceptions or op-eds. Op-eds, those opinions that often go against the editorial line (opposite the editor), are the moral taxes that a major media outlet must pay to be considered free

and open to dissent. Since dissidents also cannot give up that small but far-reaching space, we participate in this game.

In the 1968 U.S. presidential campaign, researchers McCombs and Shaw observed that the press is not very effective at telling people what to think, but it is highly effective at telling them what to think about.

Voice of America and its missionaries

THE *JOURNALISM REVIEW* FROM COLUMBIA University titled it unambiguously: "Voice of America was never independent."[220] In fact, it has been a consistent and even crude medium of political propaganda, but in the name of freedom and objectivity.[221] Of course, this obvious fact doesn't matter, since the majority of the public around the world professes the opposite faith, and the methods of this ideological evangelization are not very creative either. According to the report "*The Media Missionaries. American Support for Journalism Excellence and Press Freedom Around the Globe* (The Media Missionaries. American Support for Journalistic Excellence and Press Freedom Around the World)," "U.S.-based sources invested over $600 million in the cause of *independent media* during the last decade." Most of the money was channeled by USAID ($275 million from 1991 to 2001), the former U.S. Information Service (USIS), and the Open Society Institute. Between 1988 and 1997, USAID contributed nearly $14 million to the Latin American Journalism Project (LAJP) in Central American countries.

Voice of America (VOA), which along with TV Martí and other channels (their names include terms like *Free* or *Liberty*), is a branch of the U.S. Agency for Global Media funded by the U.S. government. It was founded in 1941, initially with the noble goal of countering Nazi propaganda, a direct descendant of American propaganda, in the same way that Joseph Goebbels was inspired by Edward Bernays and Hitler by Madison Grant. Since then, VOA has continued to operate in dozens of countries, especially during the Cold War and afterward, "to promote democratic values." Beyond the slogans, VOA is a well-known propaganda media conglomerate that in the past served to prepare hardline coups, with invasions or direct military interventions. Today, its budget, funded by the U.S.

government, amounts to hundreds of millions of dollars, and it operates in various countries shaping public opinion.

It has also been one of the media extensions of the CIA. Like the Agency, VOA is a permanent entity and, in theory, is not intended to operate within U.S. territory but rather in the rest of the world.[xc] It belongs to what is classified as "*white propaganda*," that is, non-secret propaganda, but in such a way that it doesn't appear to be propaganda. Examples of "*black propaganda*," used and abused by the Agency and private corporations of the First World, abound in the recent history of the erroneously named Third World.

Like media funded by foreign governments, VOA defines itself as "independent of the government" of the United States that funds it. To some extent, this is true, but for the wrong reasons. No one would expect otherwise from a media outlet that presents itself as a champion of truth, freedom, and independence from any ideology or political power. Of course, as in any other case, it is reasonable to assume that at some point, some journalist has exercised their freedom against the dominant ideology. But, like the *op-eds* of major media outlets, it is merely a *moral tax* that non-democratic corporations must pay to be considered democratic or, at least, to tolerate and adapt to a complex, contradictory, and relatively open society, as some Western societies still are, largely thanks to their dissidents, those who refuse to accept the idea that countries have owners, armies, tribes, or sects.

It's enough to conduct a micro-experiment by sharing any of VOA's news stories on social media. The massive creators of collective opinion, like Twitter, do not warn, as they do with other media funded by non-aligned governments (TeleSur from Venezuela, RT from Russia, or any public media from China), that "*this media is funded by the government of…*" This is what is called *Free Press*, which, apart from media funded by

[xc] As is customary for the secret agency, the law is just another obstacle. The CIA intervened directly or indirectly in operations such as the terrorist car bombing organized by Cuban exiles against former minister of Salvador Allende, Orlando Letelier in 1976, and other attacks on U.S. soil. In 1996, Gary Webb and the *San Jose Mercury News* revealed the CIA's involvement in the crack cocaine epidemic in Los Angeles during the 1980s. This operation sold tons of crack to African Americans, funneling the profits to the Contras in Nicaragua (as had been done with the arms sales to Iran a few years earlier), despite the explicit prohibition by the U.S. Congress. The CIA is responsible for the heroin trafficking in Afghanistan in the 1980s to fund future Muslim terrorists, but in this case, U.S. law allows it. These operations are not considered racist or imperialist because they are crimes committed in other countries.

Washington, includes other private and more powerful conglomerates, free from any suspicion of having special interests, such as CNN, Fox News, and a long list of mercenary creators of the Free Opinion of the People—whichever people that may be.

Recently, on September 30, 2022, the Americano Media group, "*the country's first conservative Hispanic network in Spanish*" with a presence in various parts of the country on television and the internet and "*aiming to be the number one Hispanic news media globally, focused on the over 500 million Spanish speakers worldwide*" (writing is not their strong suit), announced the creation of 790 AM of Audacy in the Miami, Florida market, which they called, as usual, "Radio Libre."

The new radio station is, in reality, WAXY Radio, which since 1981 has had a "provisional permit" from the Federal Communications Commission to operate at 25,000 watts, blocking the existing 790 AM frequency of another radio station in Cuba.

Although not widely known, the Audacy group, specialized in entertainment and distraction, owns 235 other radio stations and reaches 200 million consumers every month. As if summarizing the frivolous tradition and specialization in clichés, the group announced that "*it strives to* [1] *empower the Hispanic community through* [3] *credible and accessible news,* [4] *open debates, and* [5] *constant advocacy through* [6] *focused entertainment content that supports* [7] *fundamental Hispanic values*."[222]

Six ideological clichés and one objective acknowledgment (6) in a single sentence.

Mercenary Writers and Editors

ON APRIL 26, 1976, THE U.S. SENATE published the final report of the Church Committee investigations into abuses by the National Security Agency and the CIA, ranging from the planning of coups and assassinations of foreign leaders to the surveillance of domestic dissidents and the deliberate introduction of ideological propaganda into cultural, academic, media, news agencies, unions, and religious groups. Any group or organization with a certain level of social prestige had been infiltrated with the aim of shaping public opinion for or against something or someone, or

simply to ensure that something or someone remained socially irrelevant and sank into obscurity and ostracism.

When in 1963 the CIA learned before anyone else that Pablo Neruda was a strong candidate for the 1964 Nobel Prize in Literature, it immediately launched a smear campaign, infiltrating the media and targeting leftist readers with the rumor that in 1940 Leon Trotsky had been assassinated with the complicity of the Chilean poet.[xci] Neruda, García Márquez, Eduardo Galeano, and many others were on Washington's list of banned visitors. Despite this, in 1966 Neruda managed to tour the United States, not only due to the demands of Arthur Miller and other American intellectuals but also because it did not suit the government's image to publicly ban names respected in so many countries. The CIA and FBI kept close tabs on him, always searching for compromising information, such as Martin Luther King's fondness for women and the never-discovered homosexuality of John Lennon. When the Guatemalan Nobel laureate Miguel Ángel Asturias (another fierce critic of the Vietnam War and American imperialism) was proposed for the presidency of the PEN Club in New York, the CIA pressured to ensure Miller got the position. This time they succeeded, but the failures of their successes would accumulate in the long run.[223]

The CIA and other indirect foundations invested mountains of dollars, as no other organization on the planet could, and used Washington's powerful intelligence network to promote "art for art's sake" and neutralize the Latin American wave of the "committed author." But once they realized that the wave was bigger than the surfer, especially because the endless coups sponsored by Washington had ended up promoting their rebellious authors, there was a shift in strategy. They turned to negotiation, where one party cedes some ground to include their adversary on their own turf. In other words, the CIA itself, with its own agents and spies, like Howard Hunt, and through its satellite foundations, such as the Congress for Cultural Freedom, began publishing the works of Neruda and García Márquez in cultural outlets that, for the most part, opposed the

[xci] The rumor was based on the visa that the then-consul Neruda had granted to the painter to travel to Chile, when Siqueiros was in prison for the possible failed conspiracy of May 24, three months before the assassination of Trotsky in his studio at the back of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo's house in Coyoacán, Mexico. Ultimately, the Nobel Prize would not be awarded to Neruda that year but to another communist and, like Neruda, a critic of the Vietnam War, Jean Paul Sartre.

radical ideas of these writers. Those involved in these cultural manipulations, like Howard Hunt, don't call it *propaganda* or *ideology* but rather "defense of the country" and "spreading American values."

Now, a couple of years after the Watergate scandal that led to President Nixon's resignation, a small part of these secret activities is revealed in Washington. From now on, conspiracies and manipulations will be more airtight and sophisticated. Based on current laws and rights, Frederick Schwarz Jr., assistant to Senator Frank Church of Idaho, who heads this commission, requests more information from the NSA and its director. Considering that its area of action is not the United States, the director responds that "*the Constitution does not apply to the NSA*." Although it bears the title of *Final*, it is a report and a fifteen-month investigation that falls short by several miles. While brave in its context, it still reveals the problems of its culture and the dominant ideology (spread by the CIA's propaganda services in coordination with the dominant newspapers of Latin America), such as when it considers that President Salvador Allende's international relations with a socialist or communist country could be mitigating factors for foreign intervention.

The scandal, which will be drowned out by other noises and quickly forgotten by a sufficient majority of the population, had begun less than two years earlier when, on December 22, 1974, on its front page, the *New York Times* published leaked information that, for some time, they would attempt to deny by resorting to accusations of "conspiracy theory." The newspaper had accused the Nixon administration of using the CIA to harass American dissidents who protested against the Vietnam War and other pacifist movements.[xcii] The CIA, the article claimed, had created at least ten thousand files on peaceful citizens, suspected of not being true Americans or lacking patriotism.

In his questioning of several agents, Senator Frank Church had accused the CIA of paying journalists, writers, academics, and hundreds of other media outlets to spread propaganda around the world. The CIA refused to provide a list of names, but the powerful agent Howard Hunt, with extensive experience in Latin America, did not deny any of the

[xcii] By the late 1960s, Washington had dropped 6.5 million tons of bombs on Vietnam, a quantity several times greater than that used against Hitler. Not by coincidence.

accusations. On the contrary, he confirmed and defended them as "acts of patriotism." [xciii]

One of the most common practices involved funding the translation or publication in their original language of thousands of books in various countries, especially those by "repentant communists" or "non-committed" writers, who were useful to Washington's cause. Another tactic, according to agent Hunt, who for a time managed the millions of dollars allocated to this type of cultural work, was to amplify the reach of reviews by recognized critics who were favorable to the books promoted by the Agency or, conversely, to secure negative reviews of unwanted books.

In the United States, the project for extensive ideological intervention in the press had been established long before, in 1948, by the National Security Council, later known as Operation Mockingbird, in honor of the bird that mimics the songs of others. In Latin America, it took the Nahuatl name Sinsonte, the bird of four hundred songs, through which the CIA planted editorials and fictional news in the most important newspapers on the continent, especially when it was about to perpetrate an invasion, a coup d'état, or simply needed a favorable vote in the OAS. Sometimes this creation of public opinion was carried out through hundreds of paid scribes, by temporary mercenaries, or by facilitating the work of writers and journalists who worked honorarily, with greater conviction and some need to promote their careers, by providing them with secret information. In other cases, it was preceded by the necessary cultivation of friendships with the owners of major media outlets, who frequented expensive parties and gatherings where a CIA or Embassy agent was always present, fulfilling their Public Relations duties. Agustín Edwards Eastman, owner of *El Mercurio* in Chile and instigator of the coup against Allende in Santiago and the White House, is just one of the most well-known cases, which also include owners or directors of radio stations, television channels, magazines, and all opinion-shaping media—Edwards was one of the main collaborators of Operation Sinsonte for Latin America; upon the return of democracy in Chile, in 1993 he received the National Public Relations Award.

[xciii] Some, like the repentant agent Philip Agee in his memoir Inside the Company: CIA Diary, directly mentions various Latin American newspapers that published editorials written by CIA employees, sometimes from the United States, and frequent articles with false information.

Although it is the most strict, disciplined, and powerful intelligence agency in the world, the CIA had multiple failures and not a few fiascos. But it was always extremely creative, and its ideas never lacked the support of millions of dollars from Washington. When it was assigned to Uruguay in 1957, its agents often used huge tape recorders that were received through diplomatic mail, which broke down every week and, after a while, were thrown into Montevideo Bay to avoid suspicion. As head of CIA operations in Mexico during the 1950s, Hunt had managed to plaster the streets of Mexico City with posters encouraging the population's sentiment against specific government policies, which he achieved by associating them with the communist threat. As Edward Bernays had demonstrated years earlier, everything had to be done in the name of third parties, and these had to be individuals or groups with social prestige. The posters were signed by credible organizations that, without realizing it, lent themselves to the maneuver. As Hunt acknowledges in his 2007 memoirs "*these posters, attributed to a respectable institution, had an enormous influence on the population*."

For the overthrow of Jacobo Árbenz in Guatemala twenty years earlier, the CIA's resources were multiple, but one of them, invented by agent David Phillips in Chile, was the cacerolazos, later paradoxically turned into symbols of resistance for the Latin American left. In their origins, the CIA had promoted the cacerolazos among "housewives" against the "communist influence" that was depleting resources in the subcontinent's kitchens. In Asia, the CIA preferred to finance pro-Washington films, but in Latin America, written culture carried more weight. The same went for graffiti. At least as a planned campaign, the first time it was organized by the CIA: 32 walls and buses were painted in Guatemala against Árbenz, accusing him of being a communist. As it should be, and as the manual of real conspiracies dictates, each new innovation must be attributed to the adversary. In other countries, students would be accused of responding to an ideology infiltrated from abroad. To round it off, high school students (according to the CIA in Uruguay, university students were a lost cause; they had too much ideological awareness, making them impossible to manipulate, so it was recommended to invest in high school students) put up posters on the doors of those who supported Árbenz with the warning: "*Here lives a communist*."[224]

When a representative of the Communist Party of Mexico visited Beijing, Hunt, who was also an amateur novelist, invented a story in which

the Mexican envoy denigrated his own compatriots. Proud of a perfect intelligence job, years later he would recall that he sent this story to Washington, where a technical team translated it into Mandarin and copied the typography used by a newspaper in China. When Hunt received the fake copies, he passed them on to the Mexican journalists with whom he had cultivated a friendly relationship, and the story was translated into Spanish and published. When the affected traveler protested (Hunt would not reveal his name), an independent investigation showed that the typography of the newspaper leaked in Mexico and the one used by the original in China were the same. Case closed.

In Mexico, Hunt recruited politicians, students, and priests for his grand mission to overthrow the democratic president of Guatemala, Jacobo Árbenz, whom he never stopped calling a dictator. Unlike the financial and political battle, the cultural battle was always won by the left, both in the United States and in Latin America, which is why the idea was planted that the intellectual world had been infested by Marxism. Paradoxically, the main disruptors of the free process of debate and thought through money and the manipulation of intelligence services were those from Washington and the CIA. Hunt financed Mexican students favorable to his ideology, whom he managed to send to Guatemala to amplify the narrative and the fear of communism.

The CIA not only invested in articles to create direct opinion in the continent's major media outlets but also in abstract art. In the United States, the Congress for Cultural Freedom, with a presence in dozens of countries, was conceived and financed by the Agency, concerned not only that scientists and writers leaned to the left but also that visual artists did as well. This foundation operated in 35 countries under the direction of CIA agent Michael Josselson. Due to his Jewish origin, he was persecuted by the Nazis in Europe and, for some reason, in the United States, he dedicated himself to persecuting anyone who might be suspected of communist sympathies. His secret catalog included dozens of media outlets and artists for whom he organized exhibitions and promoted them regardless of the artistic value of their works.

In the case of cultural magazines like the *Partisan Review*, founded in New York by the Communist Party of the United States in 1934, from the 1950s onward, it was infiltrated by the CIA, which funded it for the following decades. At the same time, the American and Latin American right would strive to propagate the idea that culture had been infiltrated

by Marxism long before this current had any relevance in Latin American and American universities.

During this time, apart from radio programs for rural workers, apart from the editorials of widely circulated newspapers for the working class and urban small business owners, cultural magazines had an overwhelming weight (something they would never regain) in shaping the opinion of the educated, rebellious, or leading class, a minority group but with a relevance that does not exist in the United States. The CIA knows this and knows where to invest its budget surpluses. Various Latin American publications like *Amaru* from Lima, *Eco* from Bogotá, or *Combate*, founded by the former president of Costa Rica José Figueres, were financed by the Agency through third parties, such as front foundations, often without the knowledge of their own directors. The magazine *Mundo Nuevo*, founded in Paris by the renowned Uruguayan critic Emir Rodríguez Monegal, was funded by the CIA. Only the Kaplan Foundation donated $35,000 from its own pocket, but it served as a tunnel to transfer over a million dollars from the CIA's overflowing coffers. The main authors of the *Latin American Boom*, such as Octavio Paz, Carlos Fuentes, García Márquez, and Vargas Llosa, as well as those of the alternative Boom, like the Cubans Cabrera Infante and Severo Sarduy, published and were promoted by this influential international publication. With evident displeasure, Rodríguez Monegal resigned from his position when an investigation by the *New York Times* revealed this new manipulation by Washington. In issue 14 of *Mundo Nuevo* published in August 1967, Rodríguez Monegal (antagonistic, in the highly acclaimed weekly *Marcha* from Montevideo, to two other respected critics of the continent, the Cuban Fernández Retamar and the Uruguayan Ángel Rama) published a somewhat lukewarm and exculpatory statement against the CIA and Stalinism in a lengthy article titled "The CIA and the Intellectuals." His claim that "*we are not part of anyone's propaganda*" was surely honest, but not the truth. It was likely another victim of another plot. The CIA's strategies of plausible deception follow a common pattern. In 1972, Rodríguez Monegal was accused of funding the leftist guerrilla movement Tupamaros, of which his daughter was a member. His daughter was detained by the Uruguayan military dictatorship, and he was denied entry into the country until the end of the dictatorship in 1985.

The leak of this operation triggered an extensive investigation into other practices of the CIA and Washington in other countries, such as

coups d'état and the assassinations of inconvenient leaders, made possible by a U.S. Congress with a historic number of progressive representatives and congressmen, something that would be reversed in the 1980s with the media, religious, and political reaction of the new neoconservative movement. The CIA and the NSA would also have to reconsider how they operate. If they were once academies of secrecy and deception, from now on they would have to go beyond graduate-level tactics. Furious at the Senate investigation committees and the declassification of a few secret documents, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger proposed radical measures to prevent future accusations under new standards of "*unconditional secrecy*." The strategies are endless. According to the National Security Archive, Kissinger himself had leaked secret documents in an attempt to punish the investigative committees, and according to one of the journalists who exposed the scandal that led to Nixon's resignation, Carl Bernstein, the Church Committee omitted more compromising information.

Senator Frank Church would die in 1984 at the age of 59, after spending his final years battling two different cancers, first testicular cancer and then pancreatic cancer. Cancer has often been a natural cause of death among dissidents. Of course, these are exaggerated speculations based on mere coincidences. The world's most powerful intelligence services would never threaten the physical integrity of a dissident. Much less one who has exposed them and enjoys some popularity.

During the 1990s, the CIA would heavily invest in films and television programs. Starting in 1996, a veteran of the coup against Allende in Chile, a collaborator in Operation Condor, and an expert in psychological warfare, Chase Brandon, would become the CIA's main operator of visual media in Latin America. Brandon would act as a producer and advisor for dozens of films, prestigious channels like Discovery, Learning Channel, and History Channel, and, above all, fast-consumption, mass-reach entertainment programs. Not coincidentally, as the 21st century began, the same Agency would continue kidnapping, torturing, manipulating information, or passing off innocent deaths as the result of clinical attacks against terrorists in the Middle East with total and absolute impunity. The history of the Guantánamo prison will be just one of the most well-known cases on a long list. For example, in 2019, USA Today will reveal that, following the bombing of Azizabad in Afghanistan on August 22, 2008, U.S. Army officers (including Oliver North, convicted of lying to Congress in the Iran-Contra scandal and pardoned by President George H. Bush)

reported that everything had gone perfectly, that the village had welcomed them with applause, that a Taliban leader had been killed, and that collateral damage had been minimal. They did not report that dozens of people had died, including 60 children. A minor detail.

On January 31, 2016, the *Washington Post* revealed one of the Agency's strategies called *Eyewash*, which involves spreading false information not only to the inexperienced public but also to their own lower-tier agents, so that no one ever knows if something is true or the product of some conspiracy theory. In a cable sent to a foreign country, the CIA disavows any operation against target X, and in another, sent to a small circle of officers, it orders them to disregard any previous information and proceed with plan Z. From then on, damned historians will have a harder time when they come across some evidence or document. When they discover something, they will be silenced, dismissed by scathing reviews or by the mockery of the mocked public.

The hundred million dead of communism

ON FEBRUARY 28, 2023, THE REPUBLICAN REPRESENTATIVE of the Cuban exile in Miami, María Elvira Salazar, presented a proposal to condemn "the crimes of socialism." The well-known José Martí radio and television network in Miami, which since 1983 has produced ideological propaganda in favor of the freedom of capitalism and private enterprise with government funds exceeding $30 million annually, headlined: "*US House of Representatives approves resolution denouncing the horrors of socialism*."[225] As for the horrors of capitalism, far more tragic, not a word.

But we will talk about it, even if we don't have the millions of dollars to prove we're right, but rather more humble data and arguments.

In *The Wild Frontier* (2021), we paused at Operation Mockingbird, one of the most secret and, at the same time, most well-known plans of the psychological and cultural war organized and funded by the CIA with millions of dollars during the Cold War, which included not only fake news articles in newspapers but also the promotion of mediocre yet convenient books and the "neutral and devastating" criticism of those that did not serve as propaganda. We also briefly touched on earlier chapters of this book regarding the hints and the few but compelling leaked evidence of

an even more extensive and aggressive continuation of the same practice, such as in film and television.

Let's look at one of the most promoted and viralized cases of the 90s, such as *Le Livre noir du communisme*, published by the ex-Maoist Stéphane Courtois and other academics in 1997. We won't dwell now on the well-known psychology of the convert, because it's not necessary. The book was a kind of *Manual of the Perfect Latin American Idiot* but for the first world and with much more influence, even though both were massively promoted by the global press.

From this book come the endless social media posts about "the hundred million dead of communism," although its own authors estimate a lower number, between 65 and 95 million. Other academics and specialists in the 20th century and on the topic (its authors are not) observed that Courtois listed any event involving a communist country and took the highest figure in every case.

For example, the dead of World War II are attributed to Hitler and Stalin, when it was the latter who was primarily responsible for the defeat of the former, and it was the former, not the latter, who caused that tragedy. Moreover, *Le Livre noir* concludes that Stalin killed more than Hitler, without considering the reasons for each tragedy and attributing part of the 70 to 100 million dead in World War II to Stalin, even though one started the war and the other ended it. The twenty million Russian dead are attributed to Stalin.

Specialists in the Soviet era estimate Stalin's responsibility at just over a million deaths (forced labor in Gulags), which is a horrifying figure, but far from what is attributed to him and even further from any of the massacres caused by the other capitalist superpowers, former allies of Stalin. The dead and presumed dead from hunger are included in the anti-communist equation, but not the millions saved from hunger and disease by the Soviet revolution. The intentionality of the famine in Ukraine in 1932, known as the Holodomor, remains disputed among historians. Several facts are frequently omitted in the discussion. For example, that much of the initial data was fabricated by the American press mogul William R. Hearst, an anti-communist and pro-Nazi, inventor of Yellow Journalism

and the myth of the sinking of the Maine, an event that triggered the long-desired war against Spain in Cuba in 1898.[xciv]

Stalin's government carried out the most impressive modernization and economic improvement in modern history after post-Mao China. Not only did it industrialize agrarian and impoverished Russia, but in twenty years it doubled the per capita income. In the early 1920s, the life expectancy of the Soviet population was 26 years. By the late 1950s (famine and Gulags included), it had reached 68 years. In the 1970s, it declined and recovered by the mid-1980s. Between 1990 and 2005, it fell from 69.1 to 65 years.[226] Simply multiplying thirty more years of life by the millions of people who lived during that period gives an idea that, in terms of the living and the dead, the policies of the dictator and the Russian revolution had an overwhelmingly positive impact. We do not discuss here, as it is a separate topic, his repressive policies, such as sending dissidents to forced labor camps.

The narrative of "The 100 Million" also fails to mention that after World War II, while brutality decreased on the other side of the Iron Curtain, it increased in the backyard of the United States. John Coatsworth, in his The Cambridge History of the Cold War, points to a verifiable fact: between 1960 and 1990, "the number of political prisoners, victims of torture, and executions of non-violent dissidents in Latin America far exceeded the number of victims in the Soviet Union and its satellites in Eastern Europe."227

Let us briefly look at a classic example (not the first) of a capitalist tragedy attributed to "natural causes." Once again, the abstraction of coercion initiated by the capitalist market is a perfect alibi to avoid taking responsibility for tragedies and to claim credit for any social progress.

Ireland was the first colony of English capitalism, in the sense that it imposed the new rules of fluctuating rent tied to the market and stock exchanges. By 1840, Ireland had a population of over eight million. In

[xciv] In 1898, Hearst had replied to one of his correspondents in Cuba: "*you get me the pictures, and I'll get the war*". In 1935, it was no different. Gareth Jones was the journalist who "brought to light" this famine. Like Hearst, Jones personally knew Hitler and had lunch with Goebbels. The articles published by Hearst's media denouncing the "Soviet Holocaust" were illustrated with photographs of dead people and animals, taken by Thomas Walker (Robert Green), who was never in Ukraine and was deported from England in 1935, probably for fraud, and later arrested for fraud in the United States. That same year, Hearst, a staunch enemy of the "communist" F. D. Roosevelt, had coordinated with Hitler and his propaganda minister Goebbels the publication of similar articles in the United States.

2023, it barely reaches seven million, despite the fact that, since then, all European countries have multiplied their populations several times over. Just as traditional historiography attributes the deaths from famine in Ukraine or China to communism, without considering any natural phenomena, so too, but in reverse, it attributes the catastrophe in Ireland to a potato fungus. The cause of almost two million Irish deaths and many more emigrants was not a fungus but capitalism, something that is not very difficult to explain.

The blight originated in Mexico and spread from the United States to Europe. Neither those countries nor the rest of Europe suffered famines due to potato shortages, for the simple reason that they had more diversified agriculture.

From the beginning of capitalism, Ireland was the first imperialist laboratory of England before projecting itself to its overseas colonies, in the same way that the banana republics of the *backyard* of the United States were the laboratory of the U.S. before venturing into the rest of the world. Just as the privatization of land had liquidated communal lands in England in the 16th century under the enclosure system (*enclosure*) and had turned peasants into rentiers and dispossessed, in Ireland this system was imposed to transfer a large portion of arable land to landlords. Just as Western empires would promote monoculture in their colonies (gold, silver, sugar, tobacco, cotton, bananas, coffee, diamonds, copper, meat, leather, wool, tourism, immigrants) in their protectorates and satellite republics, Ireland had become a European colony with the Peruvian potato as a monoculture and the main source of calories for its population.

Even before the appearance of the blight, various observers had denounced the dire living conditions of Irish peasants, who were the vast majority of the population. Most of the peasants' earnings were allocated to paying rents, which were determined in England by the sacred Law of Supply and Demand dictated by the market.

When the famine crisis erupted, the London government claimed that the problem would be resolved by the magic of the free market, even as landlords exported other products produced in Ireland, such as meat and milk, to meet the needs of the market in England. William Smith O'Brien of Limerick had already noted in 1846: "*what is most outrageous is that people are dying of hunger in the midst of abundance*."[228] A story all too familiar to other colonies, such as India or Bangladesh.

It is no coincidence that the man in charge of the Irish crisis, Sir Charles Trevelyan, was a returnee from the brutal administration of India and, also no coincidence, he initiated anti-Irish racism, which would cross the Atlantic behind its own victims. Trevelyan was a fervent advocate of the free market and laissez-faire, a convenient policy or superstition for a few, which survives even today in the 21st century.[xcv] Like almost all free-market fanatics, by some mystery of Creation, they turn to God to explain anything complicated: once his method to resolve the crisis failed, he blamed the Irish, claiming that "*the judgment of God sent this calamity to teach the Irish a lesson*."[229]

While the executions of nearly a thousand collaborators of Batista's regime in revolutionary Cuba are relentlessly mentioned in all media[xcvi], the more than 100,000 executed by the Christian and pro-American regime of South Korea are not mentioned. On July 26, 1950, in No Gun Ri, American soldiers of the Seventh Cavalry Regiment massacred 300 South Koreans, claiming they feared that among that miserable line of refugees there might be some North Korean soldiers. Decades later, this massacre was acknowledged by Washington and forgotten by almost everyone except revisionist historians. In 2009, based on declassified documents in the United States, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission estimated that, apart from American bombings, the South Korean regime carried out summary executions that reached the figure of 150,000 victims. In Bodo League, 110,000 communists and non-combatant sympathizers were massacred by the capitalist regime of the good Christian Syngman Rhee, a friend of General Douglas MacArthur, who was accused of genocide. At the time, the massacre was attributed to the communists of North Korea,

---

[xcv] The *laissez-faire* literally translates today as "let do" (the State should not interfere in people's business). This phrase hides its own origin, which does not come from capitalism but from mercantilism. It is an abbreviation of the response given in 1681 by the most powerful merchants to the aid offered by the French government to facilitate markets: "*laissez-nous faire*", which in French meant "let *us* take care of it". *Us* meant (and still means today) the most important merchants, not the common people, not the masses, not "the free market" but "the freedom of the richest merchants".

[xcvi] A CIA memorandum dated January 21, 1963, and titled "Political Murders in Cuba*; Batista Era compared with Castro* regime" reported that at least 20,000 Cubans were executed by the Batista regime in its last six years for political reasons. Although the exact number is difficult to establish, the report added that more than 800 members of the previous regime (official figure from Havana) have been summarily tried and executed by the Castro regime. "Anti-Castro groups have also left dead; in any case, neither the mass killings of the Batista regime nor its terrorist style have been repeated in the Castro regime." (www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA)

and when the names of the perpetrators and the number of victims were revealed, it was immediately swept under the rug. Even greater were the executions of leftists in Indonesia in 1966 at the hands of Suharto, carried out with the support of the CIA: between 500,000 and 1,000,000 were executed.

The same racist practices had been exercised by Washington in the Philippines during the first half of the 20th century. From 1898 to 1946, a long list of massacres of the native population added up to nearly a million dead, almost all civilians, and the invention of new torture methods such as "the submarine" (*waterboarding*), which later became a specialty of the house in several of the far-right military dictatorships in Latin America, all supported by Washington, and more recently in Guantánamo, a lawless province where human rights are violated in Cuba.

As evidence of the repeated and brutal racism suffered by the Philippines, like so many other territories with "peaceful blacks," browns, and yellows, any of the hundreds of letters sent by American soldiers to their families would suffice. For example, on July 20, 1899, the soldier and correspondent for the *New York Evening Post* in the Philippines, H. L. Wells, wrote that "so far no one has questioned the fact that our soldiers in the Philippines shoot the blacks *for sport… But the American people can rest assured that there have been no more Filipino deaths than necessary; at least no more than the British considered necessary to kill in India and Sudan; no more than the French killed in Annam [Vietnam*]."230 Wells was absolutely right. In the early years of the occupation, the United States only killed a few tens of thousands of insignificant Filipinos, no more than France and the United Kingdom. It would continue killing in the coming years until reaching the figure of half a million.

Few, like David Thoreau half a century earlier against the war in Mexico, dared to publicly denounce this immorality that victimized the aggressor under the verses of Rudyard Kipling in honor of the altruistic sacrifice of the white race. In 1906, Twain, one of the founders of the Anti-Imperialist League of New York and a staunch critic of the atrocities of his own country, published an essay analyzing the glory of what the reports defined as a heroic victory. Under the title "The Moro Massacre," Twain reflected on the "dead or alive" order to solve the problem of a village of a thousand "dark-skinned savages" who had taken refuge in the crater of a mountain, seven hundred meters high. According to the triumphant reports, the villagers could not be taken out alive but were taken out dead, after a day and

a half of shooting from above with state-of-the-art weapons to respond to the primitive stones of the besieged that rained down from below. With bitter irony, Twain left us a reflective testimony on the true meaning of the words "heroism" and "bravery of our troops," who, on March 7, 1906, posed for a photograph in front of a pile of corpses as hunting trophies. "How do they call that a battle?... We completed the four-day siege with the massacre of all those defenseless people."231

The fact that the wounded were finished off on the ground or that the ammunition used was *dum-dum bullets*, bullets that expand upon entering the victim's body, will also not be discussed for long, but it caught the attention of some American critics and analysts that in the war against the Philippines tens of thousands of dead were counted with almost no wounded or prisoners, when the historical pattern of wars is the opposite. In the American Civil War, there was one dead for every five wounded; in the Philippines, fifteen dead were reported for every wounded. The de facto governor, General Arthur MacArthur, explained this strange statistical phenomenon: "what happens is that men of Anglo-Saxon blood do not die as easily after being wounded as those who belong to inferior races." Little or nothing has changed since the previous century. Little or nothing will change in the century to come.

The same story, the same racism, and the same greed will continue to be expressed through the power of arms. Seventy years after the first massacres in the Philippines, in the documentary *Hearts and Minds*, the American general William Childs Westmoreland, hero of the Vietnam War and with so many decorations they didn't fit on his uniform, declared that "Asians do not understand the value of life. Over there, life is cheap, that's part of the philosophy of the East, besides, there are so many of them."232 After the Second World War against the Nazis, it became bad form to speak of race, so the word was replaced by philosophy, ideology, communism, and, finally, culture.

The largest number added to the "*94 million victims of communism*" according to Stéphane Courtois, refers to the catastrophic famine in Mao's China between 1958-1962. This famine did not cause 60 million deaths, but (very likely and based on various estimates) between 30 and 40 million. In no case was it a deliberate and racist extermination plan, Nazi-style in Germany, French in Africa, British in India, American in Asia and Latin America, or Japanese in China—which also does not mean that the Chinese are free from racism.

One of the most recognized researchers by the Western press on this topic, the Chinese historian and dissident Yang Jisheng, in his book *Tombstone* (Hong Kong, 2012), estimated a figure of 36 million, though he later considers "*40 million who could have been born*."[233] He is not referring to unborn fetuses (simple mathematical reason) but to those millions who would have been procreated if their parents had not died years earlier. If we apply this same criterion to the tragedies caused by capitalism, the figures would escape imagination, so I believe it would be better to consider only the direct and indirect victims of each tragedy; not the hypothetical ones or those who never came down from heaven.[xcvii]

On the other hand, the texts that denounce these deaths by famine in China as proof of communist brutality present the tragedy as if the famine were a unique and singular event, without considering that hunger and deaths in the Asian giant were the norm. Even the famines, which became more frequent and more deadly after capitalist companies and their armed forces from European powers decided to harass, blockade, and drain China through their commercial fleets starting in the 16th century, turning the world's largest economic power into a sea of misery, especially from the Opium War of 1839-42 to the Japanese occupation of 1937, which also left millions dead. From 1810 to 1849, various famines killed 45 million Chinese. Although historians attribute much of this tragedy to droughts, following the analytical criteria applied to the 1958 famine, the responsibility of the government, then under the dictatorship of Western companies and the British navy, could also be considered. The same can be said of the famine that in 1907-1911 killed 25 million Chinese (according to experts, it was actually worse than the famine of 1958-62) due to three months of rain, lack of civil infrastructure, lack of social plans to address it, and the repression by government forces against the rebellions that arose from the catastrophe.

The need for industrialization in the Soviet Union first and then in China was also repeated in younger and less populated countries like Brazil and Argentina, and their only sin was arriving late and, in the case of China, combining disastrous policies (essentially disruptive of traditional production practices) with climatic problems. Despite everything,

[xcvii] Jisheng's book has been criticized by various academics, including mathematicians who consider that his method completely violates the basic principles that modern mathematics must follow to analyze social problems.

life expectancy in China began to improve rapidly from the 1960s. From 1960 until Mao's death in 1976, it rose from 44 years to 65. That is, 21 more years, while in the same period, the gain in the United States, during its decade of greatest economic power, was two years (from 70 to 72).

We will not consider here the case of the Great Depression in the United States in the 1930s, as there is an academic void on the subject. The million Mexicans sent into exile (including 60 percent U.S. citizens with Mexican faces) and the deaths from the massive famine are often explained away with arguments like: during the Great Depression, life expectancy did not decrease but rather increased, as there were fewer traffic accidents and fewer people smoked and drank alcohol (even though these last two factors never have an immediate effect but rather over many years). It is a topic for another chapter and for other years of research.

Let us return to tragedies better analyzed by experts. In India, the reality was no better than in Mao's China, but rather the opposite, yet it did not receive the powerful attack of Western propaganda machinery. Starting in 1950, the new democratic state of India improved the life expectancy of its population, but this was not due to any plan but simply to no longer being a starved, brutalized, and plundered colony of the British Empire, which between 1880 and 1920 alone was directly responsible for the deaths of 160 million people. However, during this period of capitalist democracy in India, deaths attributable to the absence of social reforms continued to add up, at least 100 million. The world-renowned economist and Harvard University professor, Amartya Sen, and Jean Drèze of the London School of Economics, in 1991 published *Hunger and Public Action*, where they rigorously analyzed several forgotten cases of global famines caused by systems, models, and political decisions. In chapter 11, they observed: "*Comparing India's mortality rate of 12 per thousand with China's 7 per thousand and applying that difference to a population of 781 million in India in 1986, we obtain an estimate of the normal excess mortality in India of 3.9 million per year. That is, every eight years, more people died in India due to a higher regular mortality rate than those who died in China during the massive famine of 1958-1961. India has filled its closet with more skeletons every eight years than China put there in its years of shame*." The mainstream press did not echo this, and the world did not find out. On the contrary, six years later, as if by magic, *Le Livre noir du communisme* and others of the same commercial genre of quick sales, quick consumption, and easy digestion became famous.

The Chinese famine of 1958-1962 was one of the worst in history, not the only one nor the largest, mainly due to the population scale of that country. But the government of the time was not the only one to blame nature for its grave administrative errors. A similar story occurred with the famine in Ireland from 1847 to 1852. If China lost three percent of its population, Ireland lost 12 percent, and it was not due to communism but to the purest and most rapacious capitalism. The tragedy in Ireland was a consequence of London's policies and the dominant ideology. The tragedy translated into a positive impact in the United States with millions of new young workers, precisely where the ideas that had created the catastrophe in Ireland and other regions of the world were beginning to take root.

If we use the same criteria as Courtois's widely publicized book to count the dead—from famines caused by the system and government administration to direct massacres—communism has no way of competing with the deaths caused by capitalism. It would suffice to count the millions of Native Americans who died in the three Americas (excluding the first millions due to unintentional diseases and including exploitation, massacres, dispossession, famines from displacement, racism, and neglect).[xcviii] We would then have to add the 15 million Africans who died in North America alone, human beings traded and cataloged as "private property" by the culture and laws of the time.[xcix] Slaves who, in the United States alone, once emancipated by law, received no compensation but were instead thrown into the misery of the cities. Whenever there were economic compensations, they went to the white masters for the loss of their private property. Or they had to compensate the imperial powers, as was the case with Haiti, which, between 1826 and 1947, had to pay France a compensation of 21 billion dollars (in today's value) for damages. That is, for having taken their land and slaves from the masters of the French Empire. All with the support of Washington, which did not want a republic of Black

[xcviii] At the beginning of the 16th century, the American continent had an estimated population of 100 million. A century and a half later, it reached 3.5 million. As we detailed earlier, the conquest of America was a massive plundering enterprise that enabled the development of capitalism in Europe and the empires of Europeans and North Americans, which would expand that plunder to other regions of the world over the following centuries. What communist regime exterminated 96 percent of a continent's population? Not even these statistics are found in a small island administered by a brutal communist dictator.

[xcix] The significance of this figure multiplies when we consider the demographic context of the time. When the United States was founded as a country in 1776, its thirteen colonies were home to 3.5 million people. England had nearly eight million inhabitants, and the population of Africa totaled 70 million.

people in 1804, just as it would not want one in Cuba in 1898, a few miles closer.

Earlier, we mentioned the 45 million dead in the Chinese famine of the 19th century, but there were many others in other countries, worse than the Chinese famine of 1958-1962. In Asia, for example, we can consider the famine in India in 1770, in which more than 30 million people died, a direct consequence of the "laws of the free market" imposed by London by force of cannon and administered by the mega-private company East India Company. In 1876, El Niño caused a drought in India. This climatic phenomenon was known to the population, which had adapted to periodic droughts, avoiding the famines that would follow the period administered by Britain. The enclosure and privatization of land and rivers deprived millions of people of emergency access to communal resources such as firewood, fodder for livestock (which, in turn, produced fertilizer for crops), and crucial access to irrigation water. Within a few years, ten million Indians died as a result of *the capitalist model* for the success of peoples. The same phenomenon repeated in 1896 and 1902 with even more severe consequences: another 20 million people died of hunger, even though the country had a surplus of grains and other food. What happened? Well, the usual: the food reserves were sent to London and the rest of the developed continent, as the scarcity caused by the climatic phenomenon had driven up food prices in European markets.[c]

Between 1880 and 1920, 165 million Indians died due to the administrative brutality of the British Empire. Later, Winston Churchill admitted: "*I hate Indians. They are a beastly people with a beastly religion*."[234] In the early 1930s, as was common among the wealthiest class in the United States, Churchill admired Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini—and acted according to his convictions. In 1943, he took agricultural production from Bengal to feed his army in Somalia, devastating its fragile economy. The mountain of dead from hunger in that year alone amounted to more than three million. All based on the same criteria applied to Ireland a century earlier: England first, then the inferior races. Amid rivers of corpses, the 19th-century administrators of London explained the Irish tragedy: the Irish were an inferior race and had to learn the rules of the market. The same story a century later, while they fought against Nazi racism in Europe

[c] According to Jason Hickel, between 1875 and 1900 (the worst period of droughts in India), the transfer of wheat from India to London was 10 million tons per year.

(in reality, they fought for their own interests): the Bengalis, like the Irish a century before, are an inferior race and must learn the rules of the free market. Racism and self-interest. Not a market, and certainly not a free market. What matters first is our development and well-being, and second, that history and people will repeat what the winners say. Therefore, more important than the truth is winning.

Courtois's book also lists two million deaths in North Korea attributed to communism out of the total three million deaths, without considering that the indiscriminate bombings by General Douglas MacArthur and other "defenders of freedom" wiped out 80 percent of the country. Since 1950, hundreds of tons of bombs were often dropped in a single day, all of which, according to Courtois and his Miami-based echo chambers, were not responsible for the deaths of many people. The same method applied in Japan a few years earlier, under the conviction that killing Japanese caused no remorse. In other words, the perfect continuation of the racist mentality of the slave-owning South, a combination of contempt for inferior beings and the abuse of the only solution at hand: firearms, bombs from the sky as a divine solution.

In Japan, General LeMay had been the mastermind behind the planning of the bombing of several cities, such as Nagoya, Osaka, Yokohama, and Kobe, between February and May 1945, three months before the atomic bombs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On the night of March 10, LeMay ordered 1,500 tons of explosives to be dropped on Tokyo from 300 B-29 bombers. 500,000 bombs rained down from 1:30 to 3:00 in the morning. 100,000 men, women, and children died in a few hours, and a million others were seriously injured. A precursor to Napalm bombs, gelatinous fire that stuck to houses and human flesh, was successfully tested. "Women ran with their babies like torches on their backs," recalled Nihei, a survivor. "I don't mind killing Japanese," General LeMay had said, the same man who less than two decades later would recommend to President Kennedy to drop a few atomic bombs on Havana as a way to solve the problem of the bearded rebels. In the early 80s, Secretary of State Alexander Haig would tell President Ronald Reagan: "Just give me the order, and I'll turn that shitty island into an empty parking lot."235

Courtois also counts one million deaths in Vietnam due to the communists, without considering that it was a war of independence against the imperial powers of France and the United States, which left at least two million dead, most not in combat but under the classic American

aerial bombing inaugurated in 1927 against Sandino in Nicaragua and the use of the chemical Agent Orange, which not only wiped a million innocents off the map indiscriminately but whose effects on genetic mutations are still felt today. With absolute frivolity, he mentions the use of "Yellow Rain," based on an accusation by Reagan's Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, about the poisoning by the Soviet Union of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia in 1977.[236] This accusation was proven baseless by a field study by Harvard professor Matthew Meselson, who concluded that the levels of trichothecene mycotoxins occur naturally in the region's vegetation.[ci] The genocide perpetrated by Washington with Agent Orange was not only proven, but thousands of American soldiers sued their government for being affected by the chemical. The Vietnamese were still something similar.

The barbarism of the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia (whose victims are estimated at one million) is also entirely attributed to "communism," simply because the regime was communist, without mentioning that Pol Pot had been supported by Washington and Western corporations; that it was communist Vietnam, which defeated the United States, that put an end to that barbarism while the West continued to support the genocidaires, recognizing them at the UN as the legitimate government until the 1980s. Between 1969 and 1973, more bombs (500,000 tons) fell on Cambodia than fell on Germany and Japan during World War II. The same happened to North Korea and Laos. In 1972, President Nixon asked: "How many did we kill in Laos?" To which his Secretary of State, Ron Ziegler, replied: "About ten thousand, or maybe fifteen thousand." Henry Kissinger added: "In Laos, we also killed about ten thousand, maybe fifteen thousand." The same CIA Director William Colby proudly stated that in four years as an agent in Vietnam, he had overseen the assassination of more than 20,000 rebel activists, many of them after being tortured, although other estimates double and triple that figure.237 The list is endless, and no one cares because these are not important deaths, and above all, because it's not considered proper to come across as "anti-

[ci] There is an audio recording where Professor Meselson acknowledges that, after an extensive two-year study in the region, assisted by an interdisciplinary group ranging from chemists to linguists, they never found a single person who repeated the testimony about a yellow rain dropped from an airplane. All the evidence in favor of the circulating theory were "false positives." (Science History Podcast: Episode 19. *Yellow Rain: Matthew Meselson*. Libsyn.com: sciencehistory.libsyn.com/episode-19-yellow-rain-matthew-meselson).

American" by trying to tell the truth to awaken Americans even in the slightest, like someone trying to rouse a drunk lying in the middle of a busy street.

We could go on recalling the direct complicity of the most powerful companies, paradigms of capitalist success, in Hitler's massacres before and during World War II—companies like the Associated Press, JPMorgan (Chase Bank), Ford, GM, Texaco, Alcoa, and dozens of other famous firms that still operate successfully today. For example, IBM, which provided services to Hitler starting in 1933 for the massive data processing that enabled the identification of Jews and Roma, who were later exterminated.

We could continue this obscene tally of massacres carried out by the ideology that is considered the paradigm of freedom and human rights, with the coups d'état and military dictatorships orchestrated and supported by the invisible hand of capitalism, the secret agencies, and the more visible hands of Washington, London, Paris, Brussels, and the powerful corporations of the developed world.

To consider just a few illustrative examples, let's recall the military coup planned and executed by the CIA in Guatemala in 1954, based on fake news, which not only destroyed the nascent democracy in that country (accustomed to being ruled by brutal dictatorships serving the United Fruit Co.) but also left 200,000 dead over four decades of systematic massacres of indigenous people and poor peasants, which the press called a "civil war." In the mid-1960s, in Indonesia, nearly a million suspected leftists were executed by the regime of General Suharto, imposed and sustained by the CIA, as a way to rid themselves of Sukarno, the revolutionary founder of independent Indonesia and one of the founders of the Non-Aligned Movement, which sought to stay out of the disputes between Washington and Moscow. For a time, media propaganda convinced the national and international population that the massacres had been carried out by a communist group trying to overthrow Sukarno. The story turned out to be the opposite and was accepted as an encyclopedic fact when the truth was no longer dangerous: it was a plot by the CIA and London to eliminate Indonesia's independence and development efforts and open it up to the "free market."

There can be no independence for weaker countries without political and cultural unity, something the modern empires knew from day one and their servants in the creole oligarchies insist on sabotaging. Colonialism was replaced by brutal creole puppets of the developed countries.

Almost at the same time as the CIA mercenaries were massacring in Indonesia, in Ghana, the revolutionary independence leader and first president of the new country, Kwame Nkrumah, was removed by another tragic coup d'état in 1966. Nkrumah was in favor of the Pan-African League. Like Sukarno, like Patrice Lumumba in Congo, like Thomas Sankara in Burkina Faso in the 1980s, Nkrumah suffered firsthand for his audacity in demanding dignity and trying to achieve independence for his people.

In November 1986, French President François Mitterrand visited Burkina Faso. Its leader, Thomas Sankara, received him without deference and reproached him for his support of the racist regime in South Africa. At the time, Mandela was still imprisoned and on the terrorist lists of Washington and London. Thirty years earlier, in 1957, the then Minister of Justice François Mitterrand had acknowledged: "*Without Africa, France will have no history in the 21st century*." A youthful sin. Almost a year after the truths Mitterrand had to hear from Sankara in Burkina Faso and just days after participating in a commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of Che's assassination in Bolivia, "the African Che" was killed in a coup d'état. Sankara had also (or especially) committed the sin of rejecting any monetary aid from the World Bank and the IMF and, worse yet, he had not fared badly at all. Quite the opposite. His economic, social, and ecological plans were an overwhelming success, never acknowledged by the global media. After his assassination and the coup, international banks like the IMF and the ever-thirsty corporations returned like vultures to a country on its knees, to continue sowing dependency and exploitation in the name of freedom and the free market. Not only were social advances wiped out in one stroke; the economy also collapsed. After sustained growth since Sankara began his presidency, the per capita income of the population would take more than a decade to return to the levels achieved at the time of the coup.

More recently, Libya's Muammar Gaddafi proposed reviving Nkrumah's idea of an African union and was also overthrown and killed in 2011, in the name of freedom, as if it had all been a spontaneous rebellion of the people against a dictator, and with the same tragic consequences as always.

Imperial psychopathology did not end with the traditional colonies. Nor did the psychopaths, in the strict psychiatric sense of the word. Then-Secretary of State under President Obama, Hillary Clinton, summarized the outcome in a television interview with a reference to Julius

Caesar and a self-satisfied laugh that speaks volumes of academic analysis: "*We came, we saw, he died*." Currently, per capita income in Libya is half of what it was fifteen years ago, not to mention the social chaos, the resulting deaths, and the cardboard freedom and independence imposed once again by capitalism and its fictitious discourse of freedom and free markets.

We could continue with numerous other dictatorships in Africa and Latin America, with mafias of generals like Operation Condor in South America, which pursued, tortured, and killed tens of thousands of dissidents with the support and approval of Washington. We could continue with the brutal economic blockades against non-aligned countries like Cuba, Iraq, Iran, and Venezuela. Or with the systematic hijacking of new technologies, with the deaths caused by pollution from companies like Phillip Morris, Monsanto, Pepsi, Nestlé, or the persistent destruction of the planet, based on consumption, pollution, deregulation, and the stripping of power from governments and peoples in rational sustainability policies that might contradict the ideology of corporate profits at any cost.

To close this brief summary, let us return to the capitalist colonies outside Europe. In the chapter "The Freedom of the Elite," we analyze the position of Indian-British intellectual and diplomat Shashi Tharoor and professors Jason Hickel and Dylan Sullivan on the impact of the imperial policies of capitalism, which contradicts the most promoted popular narratives by the dominant media and government agencies, which could be summarized in one of their conclusions: "*In all the regions studied, incorporation into the global capitalist system was associated with a decline in wages below the subsistence minimum, a deterioration in human stature, and a rise in premature mortality*."

If, with the same criteria as Courtois and his repeaters, we were to continue counting the millions of indigenous people killed in the Americas in the process that made capitalism possible in Europe, the at least ten million dead (half the population, aside from the other half mutilated or traumatized) that Belgian King Leopold II left in the enterprise called Congo, dedicated to the extermination of elephants for their ivory, rubber for the prosperous automotive industry, copper, and everything that the uncivilized savages of their own country could extract, and so many other massacres of Blacks in Africa that don't matter, or in India, or in Bangladesh, or in the Middle East, we would easily surpass several hundred million dead in any Black Book of capitalism.

More than that. The renowned economist and professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, Utsa Patnaik, has calculated that Britain stole $45 trillion from India just between 1765 and 1938 and caused, over those centuries, the death not of a hundred million but of more than a billion people.[238] The figure reached in her book published by Columbia University Press in New York, which at first glance seems exaggerated, is no less exaggerated than that attributed by Courtois based on the same criteria—only it is better documented.

Only one narrative makes the headlines and the millions of small tweets and other opinions. That is, it achieves its goal: in hijacked democracies, the weight of truths does not matter, but the sum of opinions does.

The Protestant factor: action and narrative

ON APRIL 15, 2019, FROM THE AUDITORIUM of Texas A&M University, a student asked Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to explain the policies of sanctions against some countries and concessions to other regimes like Saudi Arabia's. Pompeo began by explaining how tough the world is out there, as a way to buy time to come up with an answer that was slipping through his fingers like a fish. With an uncontrollable inner laugh that shook his three hundred pounds of body weight, he responded with another question: "*What's the motto of the cadets at the West Point military academy? 'You will not lie, you will not cheat, you will not steal, nor will you allow others to do so.' Well, I've been the director of the CIA, and I can assure you that we lie, we cheat, and we steal. We have entire training courses for that. It's a reminder of the greatness of the American experiment*." The rest of the audience rewarded him with laughter and applause.

The same thing had happened almost a year earlier, on February 18, 2018, on a Fox News program about the possible interference of Moscow in the 2016 elections. With an Olympic display of ignorance, the media corporation's star journalist, Ingraham Angle, asked the former CIA director, James Woolsey: "*Have we ever tried to interfere in the elections of other countries?*" Not with ignorance but with classic hypocrisy, Woolsey replied: "*Probably… But it was for the good of the system, to prevent communism… For example, in Europe, in 1948… in Italy, in Greece…*" It was all for democracy, against communism. Of the destroyed democracies, of the

genocidal regimes implanted and sustained by the Agency with unlimited money from Washington, not a word.

The journalist interrupted him just in time, confirming her deliberate ignorance: "…*We don't do that anymore, right?*" To which the former CIA director, trained in the legal value of words, replied: "*Well… yum, yum, yum… Only for the right reasons*."[239] Once again, the patriotic journalist doubled over with laughter at the shameless confession. As anyone with a modicum of culture knows, "*yum*" means "yes, we do; yes, we decide who lives and who dies, and how those who remain alive should live."

The same thing happened a few years later, on July 13, 2022, on a CNN program about President Trump's role in the violent assault on the Capitol on January 6, 2021. John Bolton, the former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations and former National Security Advisor to President Donald Trump, stated that there was never an attempted coup by the former president. Like James Woolsey's confession, as a recurrent way of negotiating credibility (in political science it's called "triangulation"), Bolton admitted: "*As someone who has helped plan coups… (not here, but in other places) I can tell you that it takes a lot of work*."[cii]

Of course, sometimes you have to give the benefit of the doubt and acknowledge that in some cases hypocrisy and ignorance are confused with senile decay. On June 16, 2021, at the press conference at the Hotel del Parc des Eaux-Vives in Geneva, the Senator of nearly half a century, Vice President for two terms, and, at the time, President of the United States, Joe Biden, confidently and comfortably addressed the suspected Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. elections: "*What would it be like if the rest of the world* considered *that the United States directly interferes in the elections of other countries and everyone knew it? What would it be like if we got involved in activities that he* [the President of Russia] *participates in? That diminishes a country's reputation* […] *It's not what I do; it's the actions that other countries take, in this case Russia, that are contrary to international norms* […] *They can't dictate what happens in the world*."[240]

[cii] According to the same Cline Center at the University of Illinois, between 1945 and 2019 there were 336 coup attempts and 181 coup conspiracies. 191 occurred when Bolton held a position in the U.S. government, and 131 attempts when Bolton served in the State Department, as UN ambassador, or as Trump's national security advisor, including the most recent coup attempt in Venezuela in 2018.

None of these masterful interventions would have been complete without the complicity of the mainstream press and a considerable portion of the population, whether to legitimize each crime with laughter or to smile sarcastically, feigning ignorance. The role of the press in contemporary superpowers, especially in the United States, is amplified by an intellectual habit that stems from religion and, more precisely, from Protestantism: facts matter less than the narrative. Facts are at the service of the narrative. If something displeases us, we find "alternative facts." If we cannot deny a fact with evidence, we close our eyes and pray. In the realm of media, we seek a more suitable narrative that aligns with our interests. There's no need to lie blatantly. Systematic lying can discredit the media, so the foolproof strategy consists of what centuries ago in religion was called "heresy," that is, selecting a convenient part of the book. The press doesn't need to lie: it's enough to manipulate reality. The mainstream media only needs to place its "objective focus" on a tiny part of reality, and with that alone, it decides (1) what is important and (2) who are real human beings.

It's not that this intellectual mechanism is absent in other religions or even other ideologies, but rather that Protestant, Anglo-Saxon culture has taken this characteristic to the extreme of fanaticism, shaped and fossilized over centuries; not legitimized by any logical or moral reason, but by the prestige of the victor, the Great Narrator. Protestantism separated *faith* from *morality*, just as capitalism separated *politics* from *economy*, first, and then *economy* from *finance*. For Protestantism, it doesn't matter so much if we make mistakes while fighting for a good cause, but rather if we did it for the right faith or, as we just quoted the former CIA chief, James Woolsey, for "the good of the system." It doesn't matter if that mistake meant a quarter of a million dead under two bombs, millions dead in endless wars, or coups, persecution, torture, and death in the name of noble causes like the security and interests of the "exceptional nation," "blessed by God," the "indispensable country," freedom, democracy, and Human Rights "*for the good of the system*." It doesn't matter if that mistake meant a quarter of a million dead under two bombs, millions dead in endless wars, or coups, persecution, torture, and death in the name of noble causes like the security and interests of the "exceptional nation," "blessed by God," the "indispensable country," freedom, democracy, and Human Rights.

None of this is mere coincidence but, on the contrary, has deep historical, cultural, and religious roots that connect (1) the *verifiable facts*, (2) the *imaginary facts*, and (3) the *words* that serve both. From the Protestant perspective, every sin of action is forgiven or becomes irrelevant if the one who commits it is part of the *true religion*, if they believe in the *true God*. From the same perspective, the war of cannons and the war of media are the same. Who could be condemned to Hell if the one being judged fought for the *side* of the Judge in charge of the Final Decision?

But that is not all for a fanatic in power who considers themselves reasonable and balanced (as all victorious powers do) and is capable of inoculating it like a mosquito inoculates a parasite into millions of lesser beings, even if they belong to different theologies, creeds, and cultures. Since the times of Ancient Egypt, an individual's morality decided their fate in the Afterlife, in the Final Judgment. All souls had to answer for their actions, stripped of all temporal power and before an absolute and eternal power. Judaism (based on the new monotheistic religion that left Egypt after the counter-revolution) did not inherit this idea, but early Christianity did. Morality, the exercise of individual freedom, actions toward others, especially the weakest, were of crucial importance.

A millennium and a half later, the Protestant revolution denied individual freedom, the idea that salvation or damnation depend on the good or bad decisions of the individual, since all of that had been decided by God long before the believer was born. That is, just as the European Renaissance divorced the material world from the spiritual world (a divorce that, from the 16th century onward, its conquerors did not find in the rest of the world, but still imposed in the brutal enterprise of exploiting and destroying a dead nature to turn it into profits and capital), Protestantism separated *morality* from *religion*. Not only did the new Protestant believer begin to seek a sign of being one of God's chosen through obsessive work and enrichment (contradicting Jesus' allegory of the camel and the rich man), but, in that Protestant-capitalist fever, everything was permitted if the one breaking the moral rules maintained the correct faith.

This separation of morality from religion not only explains why a president like Truman could have dropped two atomic bombs on two Japanese cities full of children and innocents and attributed it to the will of God. Not much different from Sodom and Gomorrah. This ethical-religious divorce was the central component of the slave system, by which

human life was subordinate to the principles of property and economic profit. In other words, the sacred principles of capitalism without makeup.

If hell exists, it must be full of these people. Or God prefers money and His own adulation in the name of faith over any basic moral principle. One of the greatest unpunished criminals in contemporary history, the powerful CIA director Allen Dulles, in a moment of sincerity described himself as follows: "*All I can say is that I am the son of a pastor, that I was raised as a Presbyterian, perhaps as a Calvinist, and that perhaps that made me a fatalist. I don't know... but I hope I have some more or less reasonable moral standard*."[241]

For this mindset, words not only crystallize the fictions of the past that we want and believe in, but they also ignite the passions of actions to come. One of the intellectual authors of the 1954 coup d'état against the democratic president of Guatemala, Jacobo Árbenz, Howard Hunt, acknowledged this in his 2007 memoirs: "*Our main weapon didn't spit bullets, but words*."[242] That is, action, facts, and words in service of the faith, of the True Faith, are the same thing. Truth and morality are not independent of the believer but depend on him, on his faith, on his beliefs, which are not only the truth of the world but also save him from any divine punishment. It is from this perspective that one must understand the contempt for critics and independent investigators of that belief, and the fanatical glorification of the action and the narrative of those chosen by the Divinity or some abstract form of Absolute Good (like Manifest Destiny) that doesn't require too much explanation. In fact, this mindset hates explanations. It's no coincidence that Ronald Reagan was rumored to have never read a book in his life, and in 2005, George W. Bush's wife, Laura, joked about the miracle of fate that led her to meet her husband in a library, a sarcastic allusion to the fact that her husband and books didn't get along.[243]

Lights, camera, action!—before any reflection. When in July 2004 CIA director George Tenet left his post, he repeated the same ideas of Theodore Roosevelt: "*It is not the critic who counts, nor the one who points out how the strong man stumbles, or what he could have done better… The credit belongs to the man of action, whose face is marred by dust, sweat, and blood*." Then, he concluded that U.S. intelligence agencies constitute "*a community of action with high risks; when others criticize, we learn; when others debate, we act*."[244]

As we have analyzed in other books, the United States is the country of masks, and for this reason, the Superheroes of popular culture are *masked with dual personalities* (the shy and mediocre journalist Clark Kent, the true citizen, and the imaginary Self, Superman, among many others). Theodore Roosevelt was no exception: a child of the upper class, his parents sent a substitute to prevent their son from fighting in the Civil War, something that affected his macho complexes, which is why he took up boxing, hunting, a fascination with weapons, and by the end of the 19th century, he was in favor of any war, regardless of the reason or motive. For a reason, Teddy Roosevelt became known as a columnist and then, after a bullet killed President McKinley (who at the time was accused of not being macho enough for resisting the war in Cuba), he became the champion of action, whatever it might be.

Four months later, after launching the massive invasion of Iraq and before President George W. Bush acknowledged his insignificant mistake, Karl Rove confessed to a journalist from the *Wall Street Journal*, Ron Suskind: "*We are an empire, and when we act, we create our own reality. While others study that reality, we will act again, creating other realities that will then be studied. We are the actors of history... and you, all of you, will simply study what we do*." All these ideas, as always, followed or preceded by an invocation to the Son of God, crucified by another empire and also for political reasons.

In his final hours, one of the CIA's historic agents, James Jesus Angleton, confessed to journalist Joseph Trento that perhaps he had not served God while serving the CIA: "*The more you lie, the more you betray, the more you will be promoted… The only thing we all had in common was a desire for absolute power. I myself have done things I regret. But I was part of it all, and I enjoyed it*." Remembering the most powerful directors of the CIA, Dulles, Helms, Winster, Angleton acknowledged: "*if you were ever in the same room as them, then you were with all those who will be in hell… I suppose I'll see them soon…*"[245]

Fake news and yellow journalism

FAKE NEWS *WERE POPULAR EVEN BEFORE* THE INDEPENDENCE OF TEXAS IN 1836 AND MULTIPLIED DURING THE WAR AGAINST MEXICO STARTING IN

1844. By the end of the 19th century, with the invention of yellow journalism in New York, they became a massive and more refined strategy to increase sales by inventing the war against Spain in 1898. At the beginning of the 20th century, *fake news* were systematized by Edward Bernays, which served to sell the U.S. intervention in World War I and coups d'état like the one in Guatemala in 1954. The CIA used the manipulation of public opinion as its first weapon and did so in various ways, planting editorials in major regional newspapers shortly before a military intervention or to achieve the condemnation, blockade, or harassment of a president not aligned with Washington's policies and the interests of transnational corporations.

The organizations, foundations, and agencies created with this objective have been numerous and diverse, though with certain common characteristics. In the 1980s, with the approval of President Ronald Reagan, Cuban Otto Reich established the *Office of Public Diplomacy for Latin America*, which had to be shut down in 1989 when its practices of manipulating public opinion through Pentagon and CIA funds were leaked to the public. The *Office* collaborated with the CIA's Psychological Operations department and reported directly to the White House through Colonel Oliver North. One of its strategies was to plant *op-eds* in major media outlets and fake intelligence leaks to influence the population, creating panic or fear toward groups like the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and presenting the Contras as heroic "freedom fighters." Among the media outlets that published the Office's fabrications were the *Miami Herald*, *Newsweek*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times* , and several television networks like *NBC*. Information favorable to the Nicaraguan government would be discredited as "Sandinista propaganda." Otto Reich and various leaks from his Office explained that this distortion of information was due to American journalists receiving sexual favors from the Nicaraguan government—women for heterosexual journalists and gay men for gay journalists. Reich had invented that Soviet planes had arrived in Nicaragua, that the regime already possessed chemical weapons, and that it was involved in drug trafficking, with such success that voices in Congress began calling for an airstrike on Managua. It would take the more serious journalists a few years to discover that the information they received from "reliable sources" was a crude manipulation.

The *Office* would be shut down for disseminating covert propaganda and false information using State Department funds without

Congressional approval. Its crime was not manipulating public opinion with fake news but using money it was not entitled to. On September 7, 1988, the State Department, in a secret document, recorded that the plan of "*this group of individuals*" was to influence public opinion through the press and secure a vote in the U.S. Congress favorable to their interests. This group will maintain bank accounts in the Cayman Islands and in Swiss banks (used to launder money from arms sales to Iran through Israel) with the collaboration of Colonel Oliver North. Otto Juan Reich will continue working as an advisor to Presidents Bush Sr. and Bush Jr. and in 2012 will receive the Walter Judd Freedom Award.[ciii]

The weapon of manipulating public opinion will never be abandoned, no matter the revelations against it. Among other powerful organizations, the Rendon Group will continue this tradition. The Pentagon will pay Rendon to spread false information as a weapon of war. The strategy resembles that practiced by Edward Bernays during the last century: having someone with a certain prestige and not directly linked to us (doctors, religious leaders, established media outlets) say what they want people to believe, and in this way, defend freedom and democracy. Rendon manages to leak and plant information that will be published by "independent journalists," some of whom are on the Pentagon's payroll. John Rendon, hired to manipulate public opinion about the war in Iraq, will boast: "*I can tell you what will be the headline in tomorrow's newspapers in any country in the world*." On his payroll are 195 newspapers in 43 countries around the world that reproduce his ideas.

Any of the founders of the *Association for Responsible Dissent* (ARDIS; its members included former Marines, ex-CIA and FBI agents, among others), would have added that Secretary Pompeo forgot to mention that we not only "*lie, cheat, and steal*" but also kill. In 1987, ARDIS estimated that "*at least six million people died as a result of covert U.S. operations since World War II… people who weren't even at war with the United States*" while it was all done "*in the name of the American people*." The group

[ciii] Among the media outlets that published the fabrications of The Office were the *Miami Herald*, *Newsweek*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times* and several television networks like NBC. Information favorable to the Nicaraguan government will be discredited as "Sandinista propaganda." Otto Reich and various leaks from his Office explain that this distortion of information was due to American journalists receiving sexual favors from the Nicaraguan government—women when the journalists were heterosexual and gay men when they were gay.

also denounced the recruitment of candidates on college campuses by the CIA, a practice that continues to this day, more or less in secret.

Super PACs, super *influencers*

AS WE OBSERVED AT THE BEGINNING, TO UNDERSTAND the roots of contemporary political and social phenomena in Latin America and other continents, we must study what happened or is happening in the United States. Here we will see one of many examples (though not related to designs by secret agencies or ideological aspirations of large companies), a specific judicial case. In other words, the fate of the world in the hands of a handful of individuals with their own opinions about humanity.

Currently, under the Federal Election Campaign Act, contributions are subject to certain limits. For example, an ordinary citizen cannot donate more than $3,300 per election.[246] But, once the generosity of ordinary people is limited, the law shows its weaknesses due to lobbying. One of the key players in the administration of social power are the *Political Action Committees* (PACs), which, like churches, are exempt from paying taxes, even though their actions revolve around big capital. *Exempt from taxes and exempt from disclosing their sources of income*.

Exempt from taxes and free to harass institutions. In 2010, the U.S. Supreme Court (as in recent decades, with a large majority of judges appointed by conservative presidents) ruled in favor of *Citizens United*, another "non-profit organization" in favor of the rights of large corporations. Its founder, a Mason and admirer of Ronald Reagan, Floyd Brown, defined it in a symptomatic way: "*We are people who don't care about politics; people who want the government to leave them alone; but if your country calls you to fight abroad, you will do so gladly*." For this Anglo-Saxon fanaticism, brutal interventions in other countries are not about politics or economic interests, but pure patriotism, God, morality, and the Pythagorean theorem.

Like every conservative organization functional to an aristocratic elite, its motto includes the words "restore" and "return to the good old days," all in the name of "*we the people*": we must "*return the U.S. government to the citizens*," along with the classic narrative that has been dripping southward for a couple of centuries: "*reaffirm the traditional American*

values of limited government, the defense of free enterprise, a strong family, and national sovereignty and security." In fewer words: for the unrestricted freedom of the masters. What in 1776 meant "*we the people*", now means "we the citizens." That is, a VIP club of owners with economic and political power.

In 2009, this powerful private organization filed a lawsuit against the Federal Election Commission. In the lawsuit and the final ruling of the Supreme Court, it was understood that limiting donations from any group to a political party constituted a violation of the First Amendment of the Constitution. Five out of nine votes understood that "*if the First Amendment has any force, it must prohibit Congress from fining or imprisoning citizens or associations of citizens simply for engaging in political speech*." According to this interpretation, megacorporations are citizens and associations of citizens "*engaging in political speech*..."[civ] That is, preventing a multi-billion-dollar corporation or a multi-billionaire from donating hundreds of millions of dollars to a Senate or presidential candidate was against "freedom of speech." The decision lifted multiple restrictions and maintained only one: the ultra-wealthy cannot donate obscene sums to candidates unless it is through front foundations, known as "non-profits" and distinguished from PACs by the superlative "super": Super PACs have no donation limits to groups promoting a specific candidacy. Additionally, they gained the right to do so anonymously, which among academics and analysts of all kinds came to be called *dark money* ("dark money").

Of course, once again, in the land of laws, everything is made legal. Corruption is a thing for Latin Americans and poor Black people in Africa. Another irrefutable proof of the observation made by the French writer Anatole France at the end of the 19th century: "*The Law, in its majestic equality, forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread*." As often happens in a democracy like that of the United States, hijacked by corporations, the real citizens had another opinion. In early 2010, a poll by *ABC* and *The Washington Post* revealed that 80 percent of Americans opposed the removal of restrictions and limits on political donations proposed by Citizens United.[247] Obviously, none of that matters or has any legal effect. Obviously, the law was argued with a

[civ] In the 2011 election campaign, Republican candidate Mitt Romney had said at a conference for businessmen, "*Corporations are people, my friend* (My friend, corporations are people too)."

veneer of equality, since labor unions, which not only obtain resources from their affiliated workers but have been cornered in their institutional role for decades, would have the same right to support candidates with "unlimited amounts of money." The same right as private corporations that handle more money than entire countries.[cv]

Five out of nine votes decided the fate of 320 million Americans and, by cultural and ideological extension, much of the rest of the world. Especially Latin America, the still backyard of the world's largest economic, military, and ideological power. Since then, there have been several attempts to, if not limit, at least reveal the identity of the super donors. One of the most recent, for example, was a law passed by the state of California, which sought to force the disclosure of the names of billionaire donors to political causes. The lawsuit against the law was driven by the foundation *Americans for Prosperity*, another tax-exempt "non-profit organization" founded by billionaire Charles Koch and his brother David Koch, and by the conservative group Thomas More Law Center.[248] Naturally, the 0.01 percent at the top know how to do it. The Supreme Court ruled that the law violated the right of the super-wealthy, established in the 2010 ruling.

These practices have been known since the 19th century, but after the new Supreme Court ruling in 2010, the business of politics multiplied. Let's look, for example, at one case among hundreds of companies dedicated to shaping public opinion, now with more impunity than before. Berman and Company, founded by the *lobbyist* Richard Berman, is one of the largest conglomerates dedicated to shaping opinion through the demonization or smearing of their clients' adversaries.[cvi] Although it is a private company with profits in the tens of millions of dollars, it owns dozens of "non-profit organizations" that act as fronts, not only for its actions in the media world but also for receiving donations and payments. Why?

[cv] The same legal logic that facilitated immigration to the United States in the 19th century when blacks became citizens with the right to vote and those who could immigrate were poor Europeans. Once again, Anatole France's observation about the equality of the laws applies, which prohibit something equally for the poor and the rich.

[cvi] In Spanish, Lobby can be translated as "political pressure group," but there is no satisfactory translation for *lobbyist*. A very approximate translation, though uncomfortable due to its implicit truth, would be "corruptor of politicians" or, more uncomfortable due to its length but not its accuracy, "mercenary of the ruling class in the people's congresses." Musician David Berman, a member of the group *Silver Jews*, had distanced himself from his father, Rick Berman, due to ethical and ideological differences.

Because, according to the laws that these same special interest groups managed to pass, donations to "non-profit" groups are made in total and complete secrecy. The law protects the anonymity of donors. All done in the customary fashion of capitalist extremism in the name of *freedom*. Rick Berman, a lawyer specializing in labor relations, founded the "Enterprise Freedom Action Committee" (EFAC), a right-wing organization dedicated to *astroturfing* (see chapter "Social Relations and *Astroturfing*"), that is, to creating falsely popular movements from the top down to serve the interests of those at the top.[cvii]

On October 30, 2014, the *New York Times* published a confession from the powerful Mr. Berman, apparently due to an open microphone: "*People always ask me: How do I know I won't be exposed, that what I do has a political intent? It's because everything we do is done through non-profit organizations, which are protected from any obligation to reveal who their donors are. There is total anonymity. People don't know who supports us*." The experienced Berman also let slip some tips for manipulating public opinion: "*You should use humor to discredit or marginalize our adversaries*." As we know that humor hardly exists on social media anymore, what the new Bernays likely meant was the ridicule of the adversary. "*Some say we are black helicopters… In part, they are right. Our job is to attack the operational capacity of our adversaries*," Berman admitted.[249]

The *freedom to pressure* is called *freedom of speech* and does not include the right to know.

[cvii] Berman's "popular and non-profit foundations" include "Center for Consumer Freedom" (to "win ugly or lose pretty (*win ugly or lose pretty*)", "American Beverage Institute" (in favor of alcohol consumption), "Employment Policy Institute Foundation" (to benefit workers), "Center for Union Facts" (to educate workers about the anti-democratic evils of unions), among other guild and proletarian organizations.

LEGALIZED CORRUPTION

Illegal only when it cannot be legalized

SUPPOSE YOU LIVE IN BOSTON, in San Diego, or in Santiago. You've just paid off your heavy student debt and, by then, you're hopefully 30 or 35 years old. Since you graduated at 24, you've done nothing but dedicate yourself to anything that allows you to save some money to pay off your debt, like almost any other middle-class student in the United States. Since your work experience hasn't been in mathematics or communications but in the culinary sector, one day you decide to open your own pizzeria. For that, you need, hopefully, let's say just $50,000. But your mother and a partner have barely managed to promise you $25,000 in investment. So you turn to a bank to get the loan. There's some chance the bank will provide that loan, that is, a loan with its corresponding interest, if you can prove to them that you don't need their money.

Suppose that, as in many cases, your application is denied or the interest rates are too high. Then you request a meeting with the city mayor and propose covering the remaining $25,000 to start your business. Obviously, the answer will be no, and you'll end up talking about the weather, soccer, or religion with the mayor. Then, since you're a natural leader, you convince several small entrepreneurs to join together and request the city council to approve a bill for the development of small businesses, in which the city government will contribute 50 percent of the necessary investment. During the debates among representatives, your project will be criticized as *socialism*.

When the same thing happens with large investments to build a stadium, new prisons, or to "develop new office complexes," city and national governments participate with up to half of the investment. That is called *capitalism* and *freedom of enterprise*, and even small businesses applaud the success, prosperity, the "new opportunities to do business," and

the chance to see beautiful buildings that ordinary people will never access except as tourists or consumers on the ground floor. For that type of *joint venture*, governments take on debt and pay interest. In other words, these governments take money from taxpayers or go into debt to make the miracle of big business success happen.[250]

That is to say, it's essentially a problem of narratives. But the narrative will make all the difference. In the years to come, especially during the stage of greatest decline of the current dominant system (capitalism), the aggressiveness in the struggle for social and global narratives will end its previous stage of tolerance for criticism and questioning. In other words, it will lean toward more aggressive, fascist-style policies to silence this growing problem—the problem of an unsustainable narrative of its own, undermined by the frustrations of reality, and an opposing narrative, alien to its interests, on the rise.

This doesn't yet qualify as *legalized corruption*, but it is one of the results of legalizing the corruption of the arachnid class. Let's take a closer look at what anyone would consider corruption if they hadn't already been corrupted by the media and the dominant narrative web.

As we've noted before, one of the most popular neocolonial institutions is global rankings, from the measurements and ratings of entire countries by S&P Global Ratings, Moody's, and Fitch Group, to those that measure democracy indices, freedom indices, and ease of doing business indices. In 2017, the giant credit rating agency Moody's was found guilty of improving the risk ratings of certain banks in exchange for money from those same banks, which contributed to the economic collapse of 2008. The same practice was carried out by Standard & Poor's. For this illegal corruption, a Connecticut judge ordered Moody's to pay a $864 million fine. The amount is pocket change for Moody's and, above all, for a system that handles and manipulates more money than several entire countries. In other words, the fine was just part of the cost of doing business to continue operating as if nothing had happened. As if this mockery of workers wasn't enough, half the money went to the Department of Justice and the rest to the states.[251] The same story as the fine against Chiquita Bananas for financing terrorism in Colombia. These scandals never qualified as scandals thanks to the silence of the mainstream press.

But let's set aside the details of illegal corruption. Let's return to the corruption that matters, the legal kind, the normalized kind. What do "risk rating agencies" refer to if not the risks for investors, that is, the

owners of international capital? If at any point they mention the possibility of an economic crisis, it's not because the poor who will die are a risk factor but because investors might lose their investments due to some *default* or payment cessation—which is never a cessation of payment, as in Sumer or the ancient Bible, but simply a pause in the bleeding. But since a capitalist investor never sees long-term gains, any pause is a dramatic cessation.

These institutions are not only based in the former metropolises that grew rich through colonial plunder, Europe and the United States, but even when located in countries of the Global South, they continue to measure reality according to their own imperial standards. They often shield themselves in a pseudo-objectivity: markets, businesses, capital. When they measure *freedom* in a country, what they're always measuring is the freedom of capital. Moreover, when they measure corruption in countries around the world, it's no coincidence that European countries always come out looking very good. It's not that these surveys lie, but they are functional to a particular view of reality. They measure perceptions—"perception of corruption," like the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) by Transparency International (Germany).

First, perceptions are manipulable or creations of a culture, which, in our time, is Eurocentric and capitalist. Second, even if they measured "real corruption" based on simple and objective criteria like the breaking of rules and laws for personal gain, they still leave out two corruption-generating factors: the historical and the institutionalized.

The *historical factor* lies in a corruption that, for centuries, was functional to imperialist countries: they corrupted the creole elites (oligarchies) to maintain power over a large population that, thanks to its ignorance and poverty, provided cheap and unlimited labor for the benefit of the oligarchy and the central or *developed* countries. In turn, not out of greed but out of necessity for survival and in the face of chronic impunity for the crimes of those at the top, those at the bottom also became corrupt, consolidating a culture and tradition tailored to their needs.

The *institutional factor* always refers to the violation of laws and not to the laws themselves, which are enacted to benefit a group of special interests. Laws are not written by the people but by the powerful, who only occasionally feel the pressure of the people. Without delving into the massive tax evasion or money laundering in dozens of "tax havens" practiced almost exclusively by those with enough capital to legally deceive entire nations and governments most of the time.

Tax havens and modern pirates

IN *THE DIVIDE*, JASON HICKEL LISTS some of the known tax havens: Luxembourg, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Monaco, Manhattan, Florida, the Virgin Islands, the still-existing Marshall Islands, Liberia, Panama, and a dozen islands and territories administered by Britain: Jersey, Guernsey, the Isle of Man, the Cayman Islands, Gibraltar…

Not by chance, almost all of them are tiny islands (defenseless, dependent), colonies, former British colonies, or American protectorates. The Virgin Islands, for example, have 25,000 inhabitants and are home to 800,000 international companies. Like Puerto Rico and other islands, the U.S. Virgin Islands is another colony without voting rights, small yet of enormous strategic importance, much like the Falklands for London.

In addition to former British colonies like Hong Kong, Singapore, the Bahamas, Dubai, Ireland, Vanuatu, and Ghana, we must add the mother of all tax havens: London. More specifically, the center of London, known as the City of London, whose legal status is different from the rest of the city and the country. "*The City of London can function as a tax haven because it is immune to the laws of the country and the control of Parliament, as it is exempt from the Freedom of Information Act. In fact, it has its own police* […] *a privilege that dates back to the Middle Ages* […] *70 percent of the votes to elect municipal representatives do not come from human beings but from financial corporations* […] *The corporations elect the mayor (Lord Mayor, who, since 1189, has always been a man) who is second only to the monarchy and whose role is to respond to the interests of the banks*."[252]

The deepest truth is often hidden in the shadows, despite its centuries-old age—or perhaps because of it. Since the early 17th century, the colonization of Asia and Africa was in the hands of private companies whose main private shareholders were in London. The flag of the United States is almost a copy of the East India Company, the same one that, with the cannons of its government, drained and bled India dry since 1600. Soon after, this fever for economic gain at any cost began the colonization of the Atlantic coast of North America with the Virginia Company in 1624, whose main shareholders were in London and whose cultural and

ideological foundations would define the character of the United States far more than any Enlightenment idealism of the Founding Fathers starting in 1776. By the late 17th century, there would be greater control by the British government until the early 20th century. More or less the same would happen with the United States but at a different time: the imperialism led by Washington, essentially in the taking of territories from 1776 to 1852 (not including later protectorates from Hawaii to the Philippines and Puerto Rico) would, to some extent, be replaced by the empire of private Corporations, the equivalents of Britain's private Companies since the late 16th century.

Today, overseas tax havens are not only the refuge of speculators and a kind of subsidy for the largest corporations that evade taxes and thus compete with an advantage in the "free world" of the "free market," but they also pressure the most remote corners of the world to lower taxes on capital and capitalists, all in the name of freedom—the freedom of capital.

The non-existent *freedom of markets* actually means *freedom of capital*, freedom of extortion, freedom to extract wealth from former colonies. So free are the capitals to make suicidal excursions into any country in the world, that when they return to their fortresses, they are protected by banking secrecy. Has anyone ever wondered why banking secrecy exists? According to a study by Global Financial Integrity (GFI), the annual flow of capital from poor countries to "tax havens" exceeds one trillion dollars, which is more than twice the entire economy of Argentina. Just between 2004 and 2013, 7.8 trillion dollars (more than five times the economy of Russia in 2010) were transferred from poor countries to developed countries. "*Trade fraud is responsible for illicit outflows of up to 6.5 trillion dollars*."[253]

Today's pirates also hide their treasures on small islands and, like the pirates of the 19th century, are examples of democracy. A report by Tax Justice Network estimates that millionaires and multinational corporations have between 21 and 32 trillion dollars in hidden financial assets in offshore tax havens, which is more than the entire economy of the United States. Not to mention the already analyzed "free trade agreements" negotiated, written, and formed in secret, with the aim of expanding the decision-making, investment, and extraction powers of large corporations, eliminating any real freedom in the global market. In other words, corruption legalized by the power of money, of finance, of

investors who buy presidents and senators in the First World and entire countries further south.

Making it seem legal

IN NOVEMBER 2018, MIRIAM ADELSON, a mega-donor to then-candidate Donald Trump and wife of casino billionaire Sheldon Adelson, received the Medal of Freedom from President Donald Trump. This is just one pearl among many in the long tradition of favor trading in (as the good and responsible Hispanics who arrive fleeing the corruption of the Southern republics repeat) "the land of laws."

On April 13, 2019, *USA Today* (a newspaper that cannot be suspected of being communist, subversive, or any of those verses memorized by Latin American reactionaries), along with *The Arizona Republic and the Center for Public Integrity*, published an investigation confirming what we had been writing about for many years. The title carries all the irony it deserves: "*Copy, paste, legislate*."[254] Two years earlier, in 2017, we interviewed historian Aviva Chomsky at Jacksonville University. Chomsky mentioned this reality, which the mainstream press would later publish as a one-day novelty.[255]

According to the investigation by *USA Today*, in the previous eight years, laws were passed in all 50 states of the Union to benefit "special interests" of large companies. According to the report, every time legislators write a law, both large corporations and lobbies fill in the necessary gaps to benefit them. While on one hand these powerful corporations have a clear ideology and expect right-wing parties to remain in power, on the other hand they work to ensure that any opposition, left-wing option is destroyed or corrupted with donations. In the United States, the biggest lobbyists donate money to both dominant parties, often slightly more to Republicans than to Democrats, but they invest in both, as if politics and elections were stock markets, and to protect their capital, they must diversify their shares and investments. When you donate to one political party, you have ideology. When you donate to both, you have both: ideology and interests.

In just this analyzed period, 10,163 bills were proposed in state legislatures, all copies of models written directly by special interest groups. If legislators used the software used in American universities to detect plagiarism, their authors would have been expelled from their positions at the first opportunity, as 22 or 25-year-old students are often expelled, sometimes mercilessly, for plagiarizing a paragraph in a modest *paper*. Although large companies already use artificial intelligence to detect what word analysis cannot, this investigation did not include those laws that were rewritten from scratch and may have included the same ideas and purposes. These thousands of analyzed cases were the most obvious examples of "copy and paste."

2,100 of those bills became laws. The vast majority of these laws benefited big industries and conservative ideologies. Ironically, all these models begin with the words "freedom" and "right," and they reference the principles and previous laws on which the new bill is based and justified.

Another illustrative and scandalous case that didn't provoke anyone's outrage occurred in the U.S. Senate. A year earlier, even though his state was underwater due to exceptional floods attributed to climate change, in October 2021, Democratic Senator Joe Manchin III of West Virginia had blocked a bill supposedly designed to address climate issues because it would limit the burning of oil and coal produced by his state. On August 6, 2022, not a year later but at least a decade later, Senator Manchin achieved "an unexpected agreement," according to the press, with other senators, such as Democrat Chuck Schumer of New York and a Republican senator from his own state, to pass the climate bill. How can such a change of stance be explained? Simple: Senators Manchin and Schumer agreed to grant the company Mountain Valley Pipeline the right and resources to complete the gas pipeline project that crosses the Appalachians and, by extension, similar projects in other states. The project had not only been halted due to a budget exceeding expectations (a classic in the genre of big business) but also because of activism by groups opposing the project. As a detail, it should be added that, in the past year, the Mountain Valley Pipeline company had been one of the main donors to Senator Chuck Schumer and had significantly increased its donations to Senator Joe Manchin III.

These facts confirm the results of another earlier investigation from 2014, conducted by Professor Martin Gilens of Princeton University

and Benjamin Page of Northwestern University, which analyzed the previous 20 years. It found that a bill with public approval had a 30 percent chance of being passed, while widely unpopular bills also had a 30 percent chance of being passed.[256] In short, as Mansur Gidfar, the current director of Represent.Us, summarized at the time, "*the opinions of the 90 percent of people with the lowest income in the United States have no importance*."[257]

In other words, the opinion of the people isn't worth a McDonald's hamburger. Maybe a Happy Meal. This is the mother of all corruptions that isn't called corruption.

In the United States, a popular saying has survived that illustrates the problem but doesn't prevent or solve it: "*If you're not at the table when decisions are made, you're the dish being served*."

Lawfare for the Non-Aligned

AFTER THE WELL-KNOWN MEGA-CRISES of the final stage of the Latin American neoliberal cycle in the 90s, between 2003 and 2014, Brazil's GDP grew from $558 billion to nearly $2.5 trillion, surpassing the United Kingdom. During this boom in the Brazilian economy and a notable improvement in the social standards of the lower classes, we warned several times that its Achilles' heel would be corruption, which is a tradition not only in Brazil but in any country that hasn't completely detached itself from the colonial mentality—the very mentality that generated the most corruption in the poor countries of Africa and Latin America, teaching those at the top to be corrupted by pathological ambition and those at the bottom by necessity in the face of a system of laws that, as a foreman once said, were respected but never enforced.

In 2016, Brazil's president, Dilma, was convicted of corruption by a congress full of senators with pending legal cases, precisely for corruption. Rousseff had to leave her position as president, accused of manipulating budget numbers. To date, no evidence has been provided of her involvement in the corruption at Petrobras, which was the reason that sparked the sudden anti-corruption fever, amplified since 2011 by social media and the traditional oligarchic hatred (racist, sexist, and classist) instilled even in the poorest.

In 2018, former president Lula (hated for lifting thirty million Brazilians out of poverty, despite having no other title than that of a metalworker) was sentenced to nine years in prison (more than any Latin American genocidaire) for accepting, in exchange for business favors, free repairs on an apartment he owned and for money laundering, with a 12-year sentence—charges for which he would later be acquitted by the courts a few years later, when the objective of *Lawfare* had already been achieved. When he was sent to prison, he was the leading presidential candidate in the polls. The judge who convicted him, Sergio Moro, the new hero of ethics and the "fight against corruption," accepted the position of Minister of Justice (a political role) offered by the newly elected president Jair Bolsonaro, Lula's main adversary and enemy . As a senator, Bolsonaro voted for the *impeachment* of President Rousseff while cheering for the past military dictatorship.

This classic type of Latin American corruption, tragicomic and carnivalesque, is highly naive. It has always existed, and during periods of military dictatorship, it multiplied under the silence of censorship, which gave it the illusion of peace, honor, and rectitude that oligarchies often repeat to justify their historical crimes and abuses. The very election of President Jair Bolsonaro was based on the fabricated narrative that "only a military man can end corruption," which is like saying that the best way to end public insecurity is by eliminating the police section from newspapers. Similarly, the deeply rooted idea that privatizing a public company will combat corruption and lower service costs due to competition masks the most obvious fact: private companies are less transparent than public ones because they lack citizen oversight, even in theory. Not to mention issues like national security. If it's about mega-corporations, their goal is to destroy competition, not to compete, which in the medium or long term guarantees a reduction in costs (wages, benefits) and an increase in prices and profits.

This type of corruption is condemnable because it is illegal. This is why, from Europe and the United States, it is always assumed that *these countries never develop because they are too corrupt*. The stereotype reinforced by the media and the cultural industry of "Latin America, drugs, and corruption" not only fails to see the speck in its own eye but also ignores the imperialist origin of that reality. The massive drug consumption in the First World, which enables high criminality in the countries of the South, is also rarely discussed. For generations, Colombia has been the South

American country with the most U.S. military bases and the largest transfer of capital to its repressive and para-repressive apparatus, and it remains, by far, the largest producer of cocaine in the world—coincidentally, the United States is the largest consumer. But the narco-states are the others. Crime in Mexico skyrocketed in the first decade of this century as a result of the so-called *War on Drugs*, which demonstrates the persistence of the naivety of believing that the militarization of societies is the answer to the violence created by brutal economic inequality and the illegality of drugs.

Reality passes; fictions remain

IN MAY 1945, THE *FRENCH INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC OPINION* (Ifop) revealed that 57 percent of the French believed that the Soviet Union had been the power that defeated Hitler's Germany. Only 20 percent considered it due to the intervention of the United States. By 2004, the French thought exactly the opposite: only 20 percent attributed a relevant role to the Soviet soldiers and their 27 million deaths resulting from the largest confrontation in human history.

The case of the Germans is not very different. Although Germany faced the history of Nazism with more courage and more success than the Americans did with slavery, the Confederacy, and the Civil War, it also suffered from programmed amnesia regarding the role played by the Soviet Union in its liberation.

In March 1952, the villain and former ally of Britain and the United States, Joseph Stalin, sent a proposal to Washington, Paris, and London to resolve the new militarist escalation. The proposal consisted of unifying Germany, not by forcing the western part to convert to communism but by having communist Germany adopt the liberal democratic system of capitalist Germany, with full political control. In exchange, Stalin proposed the immediate withdrawal of all occupation forces from the newly unified Germany, the establishment of an independent, neutral army free of alliances (something similar but less radical to the Japan destroyed in the war, and without the military bases that the United States installed there in 1950). The peace agreement would also relieve a war-weary Soviet Union at a military disadvantage. The proposal failed when

Bonn and Washington accepted the gift of communist Germany but not what Stalin demanded in return, namely the neutrality of a unified Germany and the cooling of the arms race. The West's Plan A was to integrate West Germany into the capitalist bloc's military system before any other negotiations. Throughout that year, Stalin sent three more proposals, with the same result. In the 1980s, declassified archives showed that Stalin's proposals were serious, but in 1952 Moscow was accused of proposing the impossible for propaganda purposes. The more than reasonable peace plan from the West's greatest ally against the Nazis just a few years earlier had failed. The goal of Washington, Bonn, and London was to continue expanding their military machinery at any cost. All in the name of democracy and freedom.

In 1961, NATO appointed General Adolf Bruno Heusinger as head of its powerful Military Committee in Washington. Heusinger had been one of Hitler's closest officers (the third in the chain of command) who were never condemned by the victorious Western powers, but quite the opposite: like the case of thousands of lesser-known Nazis, they were rewarded for their passion and knowledge in "the fight against communism." Heusinger's appointment came when the Soviet Union demanded he be tried for his war crimes, particularly during the Nazi invasion of Eastern Europe and Russia at the beginning of World War II.

In addition to his appointment as NATO's military chief, Heusinger was decorated by the United States with the Legion of Merit medal, created by Franklin D. Roosevelt. Heusinger hung it alongside the Iron Cross and the Nazi War Merit Cross, awarded by Hitler, among other decorations that high-ranking military officers display at social events. In 1971, Johannes Steinhoff, also honored with a Nazi Iron Cross, was appointed NATO's military chief. Ernst Ferber, decorated with the Iron Cross, was named head of NATO's Allied Forces in Central Europe in 1973. Karl Schnell also received the Nazi Iron Cross and succeeded General Ferber as head of NATO's Allied Forces in Central Europe in 1975. Franz Joseph Schulze also received a Nazi Iron Cross and was appointed head of NATO's Allied Forces in Central Europe in 1977. Among others.

None of this should be surprising if we consider that the very idea of NATO had emerged in Nazi Germany as a form of alliance with the capitalist bloc against the Soviets. An alliance that, at the corporate, political, and economic levels, had existed long before the war broke out. Heinrich Himmler, one of the main organizers of what is now called the Jewish

Holocaust, was one of the first to propose this idea. Reinhard Gehlen, Hans Speidel, Albert Schnez, and Johannes Steinhoff, other powerful Nazi military figures, protected and rewarded by the West, had more luck and were employed by Washington and the CIA, all united by a new common enemy (the wartime ally) and with a clear plan for a military alliance called NATO.

There were two reasons in plain sight for the Western powers' rejection of Stalin's 1952 proposal. The first reason was purely militaristic, summarized in what President Eisenhower considered one of the greatest dangers to democracy and, in 1961, called the "*military-industrial complex*." The second reason also stems from the depths of history: in just thirty years, the Soviet Union had achieved one of the most impressive economic and social feats in modern history, all despite being the power that suffered the most, socially and economically, in its fight against Nazism.

The goal was, at any cost, to avoid the bad example of others' success. As we have developed in other books, words create the reality we believe is independent of words. Although the propaganda of "free media" in the West insisted otherwise, the intelligence agencies of Western countries saw no possibility of a Soviet military invasion. That Stalin confirmed these reports with a proposal aimed at reducing the war-like tension of the capitalist world was unacceptable.

When the Soviet Union committed suicide in 1991 (under much worse conditions, Cuba maintained its communist system), Russia fell into an economic and social crisis in the best capitalist style, worsening almost all social indicators; a kind of return to Tsarist Russia, but the powerful media sold it as a way out of the crisis, celebrating the opening of a giant McDonald's in Moscow as a symbol of freedom and democratic nourishment.

Now that Russia is no longer communist, the Calvinist paranoia to keep the rest of humanity under moral and productive control, at any cost and in the name of freedom and democracy, becomes clear.

This entire history, like other cases, was forgotten. According to Stephane Grimaldi, director of the Caen Memorial Museum, "*In 1945, the great ally was Stalin and the Soviet Union; their role was absolutely clear to the French*." But the effect of the Cold War and the massive cultural propaganda of Hollywood, the greatest creator of modern myths of the 20th century, turned the judgment on a relevant fact of the past. Hollywood did the same with the mythologization of the war against Mexico in 1845

with films like *The Alamo*. The same with the moral whitewashing of the role of the Confederacy in the Civil War. More recently, it did the same with the invention of a moral triumph (similar to that of the South during "reconstruction") in the Vietnam War through countless films, in addition to books, with the support of a functional press and a largely obedient journalism.

More recently, during the neoliberal wave of the 1990s, even in Sweden, a country characterized by its social policies, lobbies and media corporations sank their teeth in. In 1988, the three main newspapers devoted themselves to editorial bombardment in promotion of the ideology of the "free market," "*despite the fact that Swedes continued to support the welfare state, unions, and socialist policies*."[258] The same can be said of a long list of countries, including the United States: when in 2010 the Supreme Court removed the cap on corporate donations to political parties (a political decision won by 5 to 4, by a body of judges dominated by conservatives), the majority of citizens held the opposite opinion.

This can be explained by at least three major factors. In part, as happened since the very founding of the United States and the successive dispossessions of Indigenous nations, Mexicans, or overseas strongholds, (1) the new media (newspapers, bar songs, telegraph, radio, film, and television) imposed their own corporate interests; (2) the self-satisfied and messianic desire (also called "patriotism") of a population trained in the virtues of faith over any evidence, facilitated the manipulation of history and, consequently, of the present. *The Alamo*, directed by and starring John Wayne, not only reflected the racism of its producers during the filming process, not only expressed the contempt for the "savage Indians" declared by Wayne himself, but also presented the Battle of the Alamo as a heroic struggle against the barbaric Mexicans, a heroic and unequal fight for freedom, and not as it really was, to reinstate slavery in that province of Mexico. This confirmation of the old and founding narrative also served as cultural and ideological propaganda in the midst of the Cold War. Also in The Alamo, as before and as it would be repeated later, the narrative was the repetition of the classic "we were attacked first without provocation," "we had to defend ourselves," because "we always fight for freedom" against the savages without faith or with the wrong faith.

The third element that becomes decisive after the Second World War is the creation and development of the parallel government, the increasingly powerful and multi-billion-dollar secret Agencies. The CIA not

only dedicated itself to the assassination of inconvenient or suspicious leaders (in each case generating a radicalization of the adversary), to the destruction of democracies, and to the support of friendly dictatorships; it not only dedicated itself to creating real facts but preceded them with fitting fictions and explained them post-factum according to other fictions, always with the same ideological mold and serving the same corporate interests in the name of "national security" and "freedom and democracy."

After some time, whenever their own declassified documents acknowledge the fabrication of facts and the invention of false phrases and narratives, a significant portion of the people continues to repeat them, as in Latin America it is insisted that the military dictatorships were the response to the leftist guerrillas and not the other way around; as if Jacobo Árbenz was overthrown for being a communist and all the bad guys who justify our violence are communists, whether they are politicians, journalists, teachers, or nuns and priests, as in the well-known cases of Oscar Romero, the American nuns, and the Jesuits massacred in El Salvador. A convenient narrative for the creole elites and for the transnational corporations that received the protection of their armies in exchange for mountains of dollars, public and private. Once a fiction is inoculated into a people, it can live within its individuals, like a parasite resistant to any dose of mebendazole, to any treatment known to science, for years and even centuries. This is likely due to another constitutional weakness of human psychology, by which the invisible parasite does not explain its effects but is instead fueled, with fever, by the very organ that hosts it.

The same happened in the United States. One of the many examples we can analyze is the fiction called "Peter Pan," which to this day is taken as factual reality. On Monday, February 7, 2022, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, Lieutenant Governor Jeanette Nuñez, and the Attorney General attended a roundtable at the American Museum of the Cuban Diaspora in Miami. In his speech, the governor stated that comparing the suffering of Cuban children exiled during Operation Pedro Pan in the 1960s to Central American immigrant children is "disgusting," because the former were fleeing communism.

Those who have been fleeing capitalism since the 19th century and, more recently, Washington-backed dictatorships, do not count as human beings, no matter how young they are. The governor and aspiring presidential candidate, whether consciously or as a believer, simply

repeated an old fiction that fell apart long ago, though fanatics continue to venerate it as a revelation of the Holy Spirit. Even CIA agents admitted it.

On December 26, 1960, the new Cuban government had initiated an education reform program. Perhaps to avoid repeating the history of the coup in Guatemala six years earlier (orchestrated by the CIA thanks to the democratic opening of the eventually ousted president), they wanted to teach young people how to use weapons. In the United States, conservatives do the same with their children, but it is not "indoctrination" but "fighting for freedom."

Just as conservatives in the United States teach their children to call anyone in poor countries who fights for their rights or against Washington's interventions a communist, the revolutionary government at the time also sought to teach its children songs against imperialism, which, both on the island and in the name of freedom, had begun before 1898. To make matters worse, many Cuban parents were concerned about the extremism of the new government's indiscriminate literacy program.

For decades, books and newspapers in the Free World reported that children in Cuban revolutionary primary schools "were forced to learn the values of the Revolution." It is assumed that in other countries, children in schools and churches are free to think for themselves (except when they become young adults and enter universities; then they are "indoctrinated" by professors).

In 1960, on the Swan Islands, claimed by Honduras and occupied by the CIA, an unlicensed radio station was set up to broadcast propaganda to Cuba, with Cuban broadcasters arriving from Miami. *Radio Américas* (later presented as "The first democratic voice of Latin America") began spreading the rumor that the communists were going to send Cuban children to Russia by force.

As in the Orson Welles radio episode about an alien invasion (put into practice in the successful coup in Guatemala), panic immediately spread. 47 years later, in his memoirs *Trained to Kill* (*Trained to Kill*), the Cuban CIA agent Antonio Veciana would proudly admit: "*Maurice Bishop* [David Atlee Phillips] *knew that I had been responsible for the fire at one of Havana's most famous stores, which cost the life of a young, innocent mother of two. He also knew that I had been responsible for spreading the rumor that led to the exodus of thousands of Cuban children in Operation Pedro Pan, with the help of the Catholic Church, lying that they were orphans. He knew that it was*

I who had nearly collapsed Cuba's economy with that rumor campaign aimed at sowing panic among the population."

But Veciana had learned from Phillips. In his 2017 memoirs, he acknowledged that, according to the CIA agent who had recruited him in Havana, "*modern wars are, above all, psychological wars; the goal is to twist public opinion*." The strategies, of course, are more specific: "*one must never leave traces of our actions; if this is not possible, always and under any circumstances, any involvement in the events must be denied. Always. Even when the opposite is the most obvious… If the interests of others align with ours, then they are allies; if they have no interest, they are tools; if they oppose our interests, they are enemies*."

Antonio Veciana, as a bank employee of the richest man in Cuba, the Sugar King Julio Lobo, had met twice with the new president of the National Bank of Cuba, Ernesto Guevara, and, after some hesitation, had dismissed his request to recruit accountants and administrators for the new financial system of Cuba that would follow nationalization. From his retirement in Miami, Veciana defined Che as a fanatic of telling the truth at any cost.

But Veciana felt proud his entire life for having set in motion the historic plan, even without the initial approval of the CIA. He even managed to print thousands of pamphlets in which he announced a law that never existed. The effect was similar to that discovered by the propagandist and social manipulator Edward Bernays (having an authority in the field say what one wants everyone to think): in Miami, the priest Bryan Walsh announced that the Cuban government planned to separate all children between the ages of three and ten from their parents to send them to Russia. The CIA took note and, from its clandestine radio station in the Swan Islands of Honduras, began repeating the false story. Until it became dogma.

Father Walsh, through his Catholic Welfare Bureau, officially launched *Operation Pedro Pan*, through which Cuban parents, desperate because of the rumor, sent their children to the United States. From December 26, 1960, until the Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961, hundreds of children flew daily, unhindered and unaccompanied by an adult, on *Pan Am* to Miami to be saved.

When the program was halted, due to the Superpower's defeat at the Bay of Pigs, 14,048 children had already arrived in the United States. Some, nine or ten, were successful cases for the media and the collective

dream, according to the concept of success at the time. One would become the stepfather of the world's richest man, Jeff Bezos. Another would be Mel Martínez, a U.S. senator (a hero of the "English-only for children" and "no amnesty for illegal immigrants" proposals), irrefutable proof of the American dream and the freedom of the winner.

In 2007, Robert Rodríguez, one of these "unsuccessful" children, would denounce Monsignor Bryan Walsh to the Archdiocese of Miami for repeated sexual abuse against him and other minors sheltered in Opalocka, Florida. The priest Mary Ross Agosta would accuse the accuser of "*defaming a respected clergyman who saved the lives of fourteen thousand children*." Rodríguez's complaint and others against the same archdiocese would be dismissed on legal technicalities that do not apply in other states. In Florida, various monuments still honor Monsignor Walsh with flowers to this day.

Many children saved by Operation Pedro Pan from being separated from their parents by communism took years, decades to reunite with their parents. Some never saw them again. Because of communism, of course.

Let's look at two more examples of "planted scenarios" that became historical milestones. The famous photograph of American soldiers raising a flag as if it weighed a ton is one of the most iconic images used by the military and their families to illustrate the myth of "we are free thanks to the sacrifice of our soldiers." In the last two hundred years, the only time this myth could be justified was when American soldiers were sent to Europe to fight against Nazism. Of course, by far, the greatest sacrifice and the greatest victories against the Nazis were achieved by the Soviets, then Washington's prized allies. In the rest of the interventions, before World War II and after, it was pure imperialist brutality to secure resources for their own development and geopolitical domination, something Europe had already provided ample theory and practice of for centuries.

The photograph of the Marines "Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima" in Hawaii, 1945, taken by Joe Rosenthal, was a setup, among many others. Less well-known is the staged event that the U.S. media created shortly after the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The famous scene of "the people toppling the statue of dictator Saddam Hussein" was orchestrated by the Marines and captured by the major press invited for the grand occasion, the new symbol of the fight for freedom in the world. In addition to the title

of the historical chapter, "*Operation Iraqi Freedom*," an illustrative image was needed before the narrative bombardment. The semiotic power of this image was so strong that in different parts of the world, various causes, justified or not, used it as a symbol of triumph over injustice. In most cases, justice didn't even notice.

Both staged events have been exposed, and no serious academic or journalist denies it. But what does the revelation matter? Politically speaking, nothing. In a *fake* world, the only real thing is power.

Espionage and Computational Propaganda

Secret Agencies: The Invisible Hand of the Market

After the execution of the revolutionary Congolese independence leader Patrice Lumumba in 1961 and the attempted coup against Charles de Gaulle that same year to prevent Algeria's independence, John F. Kennedy stated: "*The CIA is a machine so powerful and so poorly controlled that even the most improbable maneuvers can be true*."[259] De Gaulle had purged his intelligence services compromised by the U.S. Agency, and everything pointed to a new CIA plot.

According to CIA analyst and advisor to John F. Kennedy, William Bundy, "*Ike (Eisenhower) left Kennedy a grenade ready to explode*."[260] After the Bay of Pigs fiasco, Kennedy planned to dissolve the CIA, starting with the resignation request of its director, the powerful Presbyterian fanatic Allen Dulles. The humiliation of his vice president, Lyndon B. Johnson, whom the president's brother, Robert Kennedy, had informed would not be on the re-election ticket, sealed the president's fate and, perhaps, the country's. Shortly after (in the summer of 1963 and a few months before the assassination), Allen Dulles met with Vice President Johnson at his ranch in Texas Hill Country. By November, President Kennedy was dead, and Johnson took his place.[cviii] In 1968, Robert Kennedy would also be assassinated. According to Richard Goodwin, the speechwriter for the Kennedys and Johnson himself, "*Bobby symbolized everything Johnson*

[cviii] In his 2017 memoir *Trained to Kill*, Cuban CIA agent Antonio Veciana, author of several terrorist attacks funded by the Agency and private businessmen, admitted that he had seen Kennedy's assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, meeting with his boss, David Atlee Phillips, in Dallas weeks before the assassination. The CIA director personally met with another Cuban exile mobster months before, Paulino Sierra Martínez in April of that year, despite Kennedy having explicitly prohibited (and despite a federal law) the organization of a new Cuban paramilitary group.

hated." In 2023, the presidential candidate, son of Robert and nephew of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Robert Kennedy Jr., will say what many books have claimed: that the CIA was involved in the never-resolved assassination of the president.[261]

A couple of years earlier, we published *The Wild Frontier*, where we observed that Howard Hunt (another mastermind behind the destruction of democracy in Guatemala in 1954, the promotion of Benito Nardone to the presidency of Uruguay in 1960, the manipulation of books and cultural magazines worldwide, and the failed manipulation of recordings in the Watergate scandal that cost Nixon the presidency) also participated in this still-classified story by Washington, for a very good reason. In June 1972, just as the Watergate scandal erupted, Hunt asked his eldest son, then 18 years old, Saint, to help him throw suitcases containing various recording, communication, and photography equipment into a Maryland river without asking any questions. Father and son threw the suitcases into the Chesapeake-Ohio Canal, near the federal district. As we explained in *The Wild Frontier* (2021), "*Several high-ranking CIA officials who had participated in the successful coup in Guatemala [were] summoned, including Richard Bissell, William "Roto" Robertson, Richard Helms, and Everette Howard Hunt Jr. All with enviable records. Helms would become the future director of the CIA and one of the architects of the plot against Salvador Allende in 1973. Hunt would be convicted in the scandal that would lead to the impeachment of Richard Nixon in 1974. One of his calls from Uruguay (where he had operated since the 1950s) to Argentine Dandol Dianzi in a Mexico City hotel was recorded on November 20, 1963, two days before the assassination of John Kennedy, in which Hunt mentioned 'a matter of grave importance for our nation.' Hunt will never tire of blaming Kennedy for the Bay of Pigs fiasco. After his death, his sons John and David will admit that, on his deathbed, their father had confessed several times that the CIA had been involved in the president's assassination. John and David will be accused of fabricating the story."*[262]

According to forensic analysis, John F. Kennedy was shot *from behind and from the front*, by a single individual located a hundred meters away, who, predictably, was also shot *from the front and from behind* by a lone individual. The mainstream press, the great creator of opinion, the servile and complacent press, when not mercenary, fulfilled its mission of reporting what was visible on the surface, in the mirage created by the

parallel government. That's what it's all about. Creating the right mirage.[cix]

Only in the 1960s, Lumumba, JFK, RFK, Malcolm X, Che Guevara, MLK, and many more became tragic victims of the CIA's and other secret agencies' preferred method: "let's help others do it" or, as the Hollywood cliché goes, "make it look like an accident." As in all other cases of aborted independence revolutions through coups and assassinations of non-aligned leaders, the interventions in Congo and in Paris against Algeria were sold to the press as a ruthless fight against communism. As in all cases up to yesterday, it was and is about countries rich in natural resources in the hands of powerful private transnational corporations.

Days after the Bay of Pigs fiasco, on April 27, 1961, President Kennedy, in a speech before the American Newspaper Publishers Association, summarized a common-sense idea that does not apply to power, no matter how much it calls itself "democracy" or insists that its fight is "for freedom": "*The very word 'secret' is repugnant in a free and open society. We, as a people, are inherently and historically opposed to secret societies, secret oaths, and secret proceedings. . . It makes no sense to fight the threat of a closed society by imitating its arbitrary restrictions*."[263]

Unlike other countries, resistance to that invisible arm of power within the United States was not armed. For obvious reasons. On the night of March 8, 1971, just as the anticipated fight between Joe Frazier and Muhammad Ali was taking place at Madison Square Garden in New York (months before the scandalous publication of the "Pentagon Papers" and the massacres of dissenting students at Kent State and Jackson State

[cix] The assassination of Robert F. Kennedy (with 13 bullets, more than the accused's gun could fire) was attributed to a Christian Palestinian named Sirhan Sirhan, who never recalled any details of the incident but was sentenced to life in prison. Days earlier, on July 13, 1968, former CIA director Allen Dulles had met with the mastermind of the MKUltra project for "mind control" through drugs, Dr. Sidney Gottlieb. The erratic behavior of the would-be assassin, Sirhan Sirhan, was typical of MKUltra experiment victims, although psychologists classified him as a person with mental health issues, mainly due to his traumatic experiences in Palestine, when Israeli soldiers ran over his brother with a truck. On the other hand, the same squad that kidnapped Professor Jesús de Galíndez in New York to hand him over to the torture and execution of dictator Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic a few years earlier, the private detective agency run by Bob Maheu (inspiration for the television series *The A-Team* or *Los magníficos*), was in contact with John Meier, an employee of Howard Hunt. Thane Eugene Cesar, the second suspect in the murder of the senator and White House candidate, was one of Robert Kennedy's security guards and a member of the far right. He hated Robert Kennedy for his defense of equal civil rights for Black people in the United States and for his failure to invade Cuba.

universities), a group of eight anti-war activists raided one of its offices. The group suspected that the FBI had been collecting their personal data for political and ideological reasons. At the time, the director of the FBI was the powerful Edgar Hoover, in the final years of his reign that spanned half a century. Unable to prove this abuse by a powerful government institution, the eight dissidents decided to storm the office located at *1 Veterans Square* in Media, a suburb of Philadelphia, and took more than 1,000 confidential documents. Some of the members of the group that raided this office had been imprisoned for confronting racist mobs opposed to the Civil Rights Movement.[264] Finally, a year later, after several resistances from the dominant press of the time, part of these documents were published, revealing a systematic persecution of leftist dissidents, anti-war groups, and study centers with African American populations.

Almost half a century later, according to a publication by the U.S. Department of Justice titled "*Assault on the Left: The FBI and the Anti-War Movement of the Sixties*," the program called COINTELPRO "*aimed to suppress dissent among national radical groups from 1956 to 1971… The purpose was to infiltrate, disrupt, and neutralize the entire dissent movement*."[265] As always, no matter how many mountains of corpses a war leaves; it's always the work of moderate and responsible people. Radicals are the critics of power. Through this same program, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and other young Americans were persecuted, two of whom, Charles Horman and Frank Teruggi, would also end up being assassinated two years later, but farther away, during the CIA-Pinochet military coup in Chile.

Historically, the surveillance of dissenting American citizens was the responsibility of the FBI. The CIA, legally barred from operating in domestic affairs, often employed Cuban agents to act on forbidden soil. In fact, through the CHAOS program, which operated from 1967 to 1973, the CIA spied on and gathered information from 7,200 Americans living in their own country and, in total, indexed the information of another 300,000. After the creation of the CIA in 1947, the task of political espionage at the national level fell to the FBI and the powerful NSA.

But the abuse of unchecked power is not monolithic. It has cracks. In 1972, NSA agent Perry Fellwock revealed the existence of a massive surveillance program targeting non-combatant civilians, called ECHELON, the first glimpse of a Big Brother that humanity knew after God. At the time, almost no one knew of the NSA's existence, and Fellwock became the first agent to leak secrets from the super agency and its global

espionage program, which were published by the magazine *Ramparts* in California as "*US Electronic Espionage*." The publication revealed the existence of the "Five Eyes Alliance" (the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand).[cx] Fellwock was followed by other military intelligence officers, fed up with the war in Vietnam, Barton Osborne (also a former CIA agent) and Timothy Butz. The *Five Eyes* could well have been called the "Global Anglo-Saxon Alliance" or, as the three rebel officers themselves more clearly defined it, "*White-Anglo-Saxon Protestant nation communication intelligence dictatorship*" ("*Intelligence service of the dictatorship of the white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant nation*").[266]

Despite all the revelations, whether from the dissidents' raid in 1971, the Church Committee in 1975, or Snowden's leaks in 2013, the textbook denialism continued, even in the most sensitive spaces. When on March 12, 2013 (months before Snowden's revelations) the Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, was questioned by the U.S. Congress, Senator Ron Wyden asked him: "*Does the NSA collect any kind of data on American citizens*?" General Clapper responded, categorically: "*No, sir*."[267]

The NSA documents revealed by former CIA and NSA employee Edward Snowden leave no room for doubt: by the time Clapper was questioned, in the course of that year 2013, the NSA had intercepted and stored *three trillion* communications in the United States. As later revealed by the documents leaked by Edward Snowden, from December 10, 2012, to January 10, 2013, the FAIRVIEW program alone had collected and stored 200 million phone calls, emails, and online chats.

When it became known that the general had committed perjury before Congress, several lawmakers called for his immediate resignation. Clapper apologized for the *error* and remained in his position until the end of the Obama administration and, shortly after, joined CNN analysts and the powerful Center for a New American Security (CNAS) as a distinguished member.

[cx] At that time, the novelist Norman Mailer founded (with little impact and even fewer resources) an organization called Fifth Estate to investigate U.S. secret agencies. 40 years later, Edward Snowden's revelations in 2013 revealed the logic behind this community of Anglo-Saxon nations: since secret agencies cannot spy on their own citizens by law, each one spies on the citizens of the other *Five Eyes* and shares it with their counterpart (*The Guardian*, November 20, 2013). This is how they bypass any law and rule of law that applies to ordinary citizens, that is, second or third-class citizens.

As Edward Snowden wrote in his notes: "*Here, in our country, we suffer under a government that allows limited and drip-fed oversight. A government that refuses to be held accountable when it commits crimes. When the poor commit minor infractions, they must endure unbearable consequences in the largest prison system in the world while the rest pretend not to see. But when the richest and most powerful telecommunications providers in the country commit tens of millions of serious crimes, Congress passes laws that provide their elite friends with retroactive civil and criminal immunity for crimes that in other cases would have warranted the longest sentences in history. […] I have been in the darkest corners of government, and I know that what they fear most is the light*."[268]

Finally, England's secret agency, the GCHQ, forced *The Guardian* to delete all the files received from Edward Snowden, meaning that the information that was not published in time will not be for many years, until the truth becomes a matter for historians, a matter for minorities, politically irrelevant. All legal, just like in China.

You don't need to be a genius or highly educated to guess how the story goes when it comes to citizens of less privileged countries. Even when those citizens hold some social power in their own countries or when those countries are old "friendly dictatorships." In his 2013 revelations, former agent and computer technician Edward Snowden mentioned the case of a Swiss banker whom the CIA tried to recruit to gain access to confidential information. A practice as old as the Agency itself. The method used: a secret agent befriended the banker, invited him out for drinks one night, and when he was drunk, convinced him to drive home. When the banker was arrested by local police for drunk driving, the same CIA agent offered to help free him and clear his name in exchange for cooperation with the agency. According to Snowden, the recruitment attempt failed, "*they ruined a person's life and simply walked away from the case*." Snowden himself makes a crucial observation: "*I began to realize how easy it was to divorce power from accountability and how the higher and more powerful that power was, the less oversight and control it had*."[269] In his 2019 memoir, Snowden reveals that the banker was a Saudi citizen, and the CIA agent not only convinced him to drive home drunk but also called the Genoa police as soon as they left the bar, providing them with the car's make and license plate number. Not only is drunk driving a serious offense in any country, but alcohol consumption is also a significant liability for a Saudi citizen.

Snowden was systematically discredited by Washington and the mainstream press. Despite his service in revealing mass surveillance against the entire American people (and, consequently, the lies of the NSA to Congress and companies like Microsoft to their users), he was predictably accused of being an "*enemy of the United States*." Of course, it's not convenient to say he's an "enemy of the CIA and the NSA," or an "enemy of Washington," or an "anti-imperialist." It's better to frame the abuses and illegality of a parallel state with manufactured legitimacy, the abuses of a secret micro-minority or special interests, as if they represented an entire country or even Western civilization.

The harshest truth only emerges when those at the bottom break the laws. This gives an idea of the nature and the power of parallel states to hijack democracies. If someone asks, "what is the CIA and other mafia-like organizations for?" the automatic answer will be: to keep "our country" safe. But that kind of answer can only come from mercenaries, lackeys, and those who have never studied the history of these agencies, which never anticipated (or chose not to) any of the major attacks this country has faced, and, on the contrary, created thousands of mortal enemies through their interventions in defense of corporations and special interests, which were never the interests of the people they claimed to defend. Every time their existence was in doubt, some tragedy occurred: the assassination of Kennedy, who planned to dissolve the agency after the Bay of Pigs fiasco; the September 11, 2001 attacks—when several lawmakers believed the Agency was a costly anachronism of the defunct Cold War…

Two kinds of human beings

SHORTLY AFTER THE NUCLEAR DESTRUCTION of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, President Truman told the press: "*We thank God that this has come to us rather than to our enemies. And we pray that He may guide us to use it in His ways and for His purposes*."[270] Literally, someone (God, to a fanatical mind) placed the atomic bombs in his hands, as President Truman did not know about the Manhattan Project until after the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, just a few months earlier in 1945.

Often, the secret agencies know more than the presidents who, from the perspective of those who are not accountable to the people, are short-lived flowers.[cxi] Presidents come and go, but the secret agencies and corporations remain. This tradition of espionage and the execution of their own policies (always "for a good cause") saw an attempt at oversight by special parliamentary commissions after the Church Committee hearings in 1975, but it was never very effective or systematic. The same members of the U.S. Congress Security Committee are fanatical defenders of illegal interventions in other countries, such as Florida Senator Marco Rubio, or, when they are not, they receive a limited and fragmented quota of classified information. "*We're like mushrooms; they* [the CIA*] keep us in the dark and feed us a bunch of crap*," complained one of the members of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Norman Mineta, in the 1980s.[271]

According to Professor Amy Zegart, a board member of the powerful military contractor Kratos, "*the protection of information, sources, and methods is for the national security of the United States; no democracy can be completely transparent*." [272] A hundred pages later, she acknowledges: "*today, the work of spies and soldiers* (warriors) *has become indistinguishable in many ways; drone strikes are planned and executed jointly by both the CIA and the Pentagon (JSOC), sometimes together and sometimes separately.*" According to University of Texas professor Bobby Chesney, "*the CIA's drone strikes are carried out under the covert action authority of Title 50, which means that THE OPERATIONS MUST NOT BE ACKNOWLEDGED OR REPORTED*."[273] This complicity with the parallel state does not only come from authors and professors with direct economic interests, but from a vast network of specialists of the "programmed collateral effect" type, such as, for example, University of California professor Joel Dimsdale, who, in his recent book *Dark Persuasion*, claims that during the Korean War, "*General Douglas MacArthur carried out a brilliant offensive against the North, so successful that it threatened to escalate the war into a conflict with China and Russia*."[274] [cxii]

[cxi] According to Professor Amy Zegart, when in 2011 President Barack Obama announced on television the raid that ended the life of Osama bin Laden, the CIA forbade him from uttering two words in his speech: "drones" and "CIA."

[cxii] The campaign against North Korea was essentially based on a constant rain of bombs (more than during World War II), including napalm and incendiary bombings that reduced almost all cities to rubble, leaving over a million dead. The frustrated proposal by General MacArthur to also drop atomic bombs would not have added much more horror but merely another symbol of the "fight for freedom and civilization." More than 80 percent of the population of major cities perished under the "brilliant offensive" of the decorated general. The

Of course, citizens don't publish their bank account passwords either, but that right to "secrecy" disappears when it hides illegal activities. The old motto of "national security" lies in the semantic elasticity of the term. As defined by American economist Michael Hudson, his country speaks of "national security" as a victim and not as a perpetrator.[275] Just by considering what happened in the United States after 9/11, we can see that no Islamic terrorist group ever put the existence of this country in danger, as a real war could, but in the name of "national security," the rights of American citizens themselves to the privacy of their information were eradicated, not to mention the scandalous and unpunished systematic violation of the human rights of thousands and millions of people around the world, from open wars to the more than one hundred secret prisons (*black sites*) of the CIA in dozens of countries and in international waters.

John Mueller, a professor at Ohio State University, put it didactically: "*the number of people killed each year by Muslim terrorists worldwide is roughly a few hundred outside of war zones; that is, the same number of people who drown in bathtubs*."[276] Despite all this, and not by chance (few things in this world happen by the whims of chance), the budget Washington has invested in "national security" since the mysterious 9/11 attacks has grown as much as the entire economy of Brazil or any European country. Practically none of that fortune has made American citizens safer, but rather more paranoid and less free. In the process, a few corporations have become obscenely wealthy.

The very existence of these super-powerful agencies has been questioned several times, not infrequently with tragic results. Probably the first time was when the invasion of Cuba failed in 1961. President John Kennedy had inherited this plan from the CIA, which was supposed to repeat the success of the coup in Guatemala seven years earlier. The plan was that the Cuban population would join the invaders after a radio propaganda campaign. But Ernesto Che Guevara had been in Guatemala when this strategy was implemented, and once the Cuban Revolution ousted

---

same General Curtis LeMay (the butcher of Japan) admitted that "*in three years we killed 20 percent of the population*" of North Korea, that is, 1.9 million people. When the South fell into the hands of the minority pro-Christian government, 100,000 Korean socialists were eliminated in summary executions by the regime supported by Washington and London, but they do not appear in popular culture, unlike the 450 that occurred in Cuba a few years later against collaborators of the dictator Batista—according to CIA estimates in Cuba.

Washington's puppet, Fulgencio Batista, Guevara had assured that this time "*Cuba will not be another Guatemala*." He was referring to the national control of the press to prevent the CIA from infiltrating and sabotaging society once again. It turned out that Guevara was right, and the new invasion planned by the CIA failed due to the lack of support from the Cuban people. Agent David Atlee Phillips, half-jokingly, blamed the name of the bay where the invaders were supposed to land, "Cochinos" (Pigs). Furious over the fiasco, Kennedy threatened to dissolve the CIA, and a few months later, he was assassinated in Dallas. The Cuban CIA agent Antonio Veciana would later claim in his book *Trained to Kill* that he had seen the assassin Oswald a few weeks earlier in Texas, speaking with his boss, David Atlee Phillips.[277]

A new attempt to dissolve the CIA came shortly after the Cold War, in 1990. Former CIA agent and author of several books on international politics, William G. Hyland, stated in 1991 that "*never before had the United States been less threatened than it is now*."[278] Lieutenant General and former head of the NSA, William Odom, and Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan directly recommended abolishing the CIA. The *New York Times* quoted their words: "*Without the Soviet threat, why not abolish the CIA and let the State Department take over? The CIA is 'the quintessential product of the Cold War,' and now that the war is over, the agency belongs to the past*."[279]

In 1991, Moynihan introduced a bill to abolish the Agency. The CIA itself published a document, now declassified, mentioning its repeated failures, including its inability to foresee the economic problems of the Soviet Union, let alone its eventual collapse.[280] Of course, it is most likely that these "failures," like the one that led to the war in Iraq "based on incorrect intelligence," are due to another tradition among the agents, leaders, and officials of these powerful secret agencies: their tendency to exaggerate everything, every real or fictitious threat that maintains the idea that they are indispensable for national security. In other words, everything that maintains and amplifies the state of paranoia among the population and politicians in Washington.

Naturally, no one can simply abolish agencies that are more powerful than any Congress or even any government, as if it were nothing. As the chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Lee Hamilton, confirmed in 2007, quoting the comic *The Wizard of ID*, "*We all have to live by the golden rule: that is, whoever has the gold makes the rules*."[281]

For these powerful agencies, the paramilitary arms of corporate dictatorships, there are two types of human beings in the world: Americans and the others—in the category of *others*, dissenting or overly critical Americans are also included. But everything requires some effort from those at the top. Public opinion exists, and it must always be worked on to ensure that the gold follows the flag of fear.

We are only bad when we are caught

ON SEPTEMBER 9, 2009, DETAILS ABOUT THE CIA'S waterboarding *practices were officially leaked to the public. This technique was developed by the U.S. Marines during the invasion and occupation of the Philippines in 1899 and taught in torture schools to Latin American officers who practiced it in Latin America during the Cold War to fight a communism that had not yet arrived as a reaction to this old abusive practice in almost all the peoples south of the Rio Grande since the 19th century. It was only in 2008, to adhere to the Geneva Convention and other international treaties, that the U.S. Congress banned this practice, which the Agency admitted to using months later, though it limited the illegality to only three detainees accused of terrorism in Guantánamo.*

Initially, the technique practiced in the Philippines involved administering several liters of water to the suspect through a bamboo tube, from the mouth to the stomach. If the suspect did not confess what was expected, a Marine would jump on their stomach until the detainee's mouth spewed a geyser that amused the civilized inquisitors of the Free World. Lieutenant Grover Flint, a Harvard graduate, reported to a U.S. Senate panel, that these interrogation practices were not rumors but the norm among U.S. military personnel. Then, torture evolved into more subtle and humane forms, such as pouring water over the covered face of the detainee to induce a sensation of drowning.

Beyond the quantitative limitation of the collateral effects of the revelation, there is the qualitative engineering of language. What in the colonies inhabited by "peaceful blacks" in the early 20th century was practiced as *waterboarding* was called "the water cure," and in the military dictatorships of Latin America during the Cold War, it was called *submarino*. During the first two decades of the 21st century, in the "war on terror," in

several countries and under Washington's No-law, it was called "*enhanced interrogation techniques*." In 2009, psychologists James Mitchell and Bruce Jessen charged the CIA $80 million to teach them new torture techniques at Guantánamo, though we don't know how much the linguistics and grammar experts were paid. When this human rights violation in Cuba (in occupied Cuba) was revealed, a debate erupted in the media, not so much about the humanity or morality of this method of inquisition but about its effectiveness in extracting valid information. A debate that had already been settled centuries ago, even when, during the terrorist brutality of the Holy Office, it was required to wait a day after torture to interrogate the victim, because even the worst psychopath knew that an individual under torment is capable of self-incriminating just to alleviate the pain.[cxiii]

Generally, specialists favorable to secret agencies like the NSA or the CIA often insist on the ignorance of the American public about the true purpose and function of these agencies. To prove it, they list opinions that reveal statistical errors. They don't dwell too much on two fundamental reasons: (1) the secrecy and confusion produced by those same agencies are not only constitutive but an obsessive practice, and (2) whenever the few documents, written and digital, are leaked, it's because someone broke the internal rules of those same agencies, as was the case with Julian Assange (2010), Chelsea Manning (2013), Edward Snowden (2013), and lesser-known cases, such as the multiple revelations by U.S. military personnel about drone killings.[282] According to a disillusioned but well-informed Edward Snowden, "*Obama didn't end those abuses; he expanded them*." In fact, his administration pursued more dissidents or whistleblowers like Assange and Snowden (applying the old Espionage Act of 1917, signed by the "progressive" President Woodrow Wilson, with the aim of criminalizing true dissent against World War I) than all previous presidents combined. Even Wilson symbolically and practically favored the

[cxiii] Just as in the 19th century anesthesia was used in shows to provoke laughter until a dentist observed that injured participants felt no pain, and then in 1916 a doctor in the United States, Dr. Robert House, observed that women in labor under the effects of scopolamine and morphine spoke the truth without filters. A possible truth serum (based on the ancient idea of "*in vino veritas*," "*the truth comes out with wine*" or "*the self is soluble in alcohol*") became an obsession of the CIA. During the Cold War, the failure of Operation MKUltra (detailed in *The Wild Frontier*, 2021) tested the limits of the dream of controlling another's mind through drugs (and the catastrophic side effects, such as the national addiction to LSD, something similar to the hashish addiction inoculated by Britain in China in the mid-19th century). This is why it was concluded that it was necessary to return to the most effective science of propaganda.

cause of the defeated Confederacy, through an intense cultural war in favor of "The Lost Cause," with pioneering films like the genre classic *The Birth of a Nation* (1915).[283]

The legality of the historic secret agency of "the land of laws" has never been an obstacle. The problem is unplanned revelations. For this reason, the systematic use of "*burn bags*" involves erasing with fire any possible future revelation that could compromise the "honor and security" of those involved in fighting for the country's security. For this reason, the prison at Guantánamo is not on U.S. soil but in Cuba, where the humane laws of the land of laws do not apply. Today, we know about the various torture practices at Guantánamo, mostly on detainees interrogated without trial who were later declared innocent, not because of the transparency of their perpetrators but because of accidental leaks. For the same reasons, there are dozens of "*black sites*" around the world on four continents, including Europe, that is, illegal CIA prisons where torture is practiced (revealed by the *Washington Post* in 2005 and acknowledged by President George W. Bush in 2006) where suspects for any reason disappear like stars into black holes.[cxiv]

During Barack Obama's second presidency, classified documents were leaked that proved the NSA's illegal surveillance of millions of American citizens. The reaction of the most influential senators in Congress was textbook: *first, deny it; then, if that's not possible, justify it*. What better justification for suppressing freedoms than doing so in the name of National Security? The White House spokesperson, Josh Earnest, said the practice was "*a crucial tool to protect the nation from terrorist threats*." Democratic Senator and Chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, Dianne Feinstein, justified the surveillance by stating that "*people want their country to remain safe*." Some voices responded with outrage, such as Democratic Senator Jeff Merkley of Oregon, who described the revealed practice as "*an egregious violation of Americans' privacy*."[284] Al Gore, former Vice President and presidential candidate in 2000 (winner of the popular vote but not the electoral college, which favored George W. Bush), labeled the surveillance

[cxiv] The same two-term governor of Florida, Ron DeSantis, a presidential candidate in 2023 and author of a pamphlet-like book on patriotic history, which was torn apart by critics (*Dreams of Our Founding Fathers*, 2011) and famous for his bans on hundreds of other books that do not align with the collective dogma, was accused by several detainees in Guantánamo and Iraq of overseeing his own torture sessions while serving as a Marine with the title of "legal advisor." Among the tortures was forced feeding through tubes, reminiscent of the original *waterboard* in the Philippines a century earlier.

practices as "*obscenely outrageous*." Which position prevailed? You don't need to be a genius to answer that question.

On the other hand, media outlets like the *New York Times*, which for the most part align with Washington and corporate interests (it's enough to recall, for example, their many editorials in favor of invading Iraq or Libya), occasionally reveal cracks or small spaces for journalistic investigations that inevitably prove uncomfortable to that same power. We could write several books about these cases, but as an example, it's enough to mention one of their latest independent investigations titled "*How the U.S. Hid an Airstrike That Killed Dozens of Civilians in Syria*" published on November 15, 2021. The report detailed the Baghuz massacre in Syria two years prior, how it had been covered up, and how it came to light. A light that would soon fade into the shadows of oblivion and the Arctic sea of public consciousness.

On March 8, 2019, analysts from a U.S. military command located in the wealthy peninsula of Qatar were observing a street in a poor village in Syria through high-definition images captured by a smart drone. In the recorded conversation, the analysts acknowledged that the crowd was mostly composed of children and women. To one side, a man was carrying a weapon, but everything seemed to be unfolding peacefully. Until a 220-kilogram bomb was dropped from a powerful F-15E, right onto the crowd. Twelve minutes later, as the survivors of the first bomb began to run or crawl, the same plane dropped two more bombs, this time each weighing a ton of explosives and costing a million dollars per explosion.

1,870 kilometers away, at the Combined Air Operations Center of the U.S. military at Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, officers watched the massacre live. Someone in the room asked, surprised, where the order had come from.

The next day, civilian observers who arrived at the area found nearly a hundred mangled bodies of children and women. The human rights organization Raqqa Is Being Slaughtered published some photos of the bodies, but satellite images only showed that where four days earlier there had been a modest neighborhood along the Euphrates River in an area under the control of the "democratic coalition," now there was nothing. The U.S. Air Force Office of Special Investigations refused to explain the mystery.

It later emerged that the order for the bombing had come from a special group called "Task Force 9," which often operated in Syria without

waiting for confirmation from the command. The Air Force lawyer, Lieutenant Colonel Dean W. Korsak, reported that it was very likely a "war crime." Finding no support among his colleagues, Colonel Korsak leaked the classified information and the cover-up measures to a U.S. Senate committee, acknowledging that, in doing so, he was "putting himself at serious risk of military retaliation." According to Korsak, his superiors refused any investigation. "The investigation into the bombings had died before it even began," he wrote. "My supervisor refused to discuss the matter with me."

When the *New York Times* conducted an investigation into the events and sent it to the Air Force command, they confirmed the facts but justified them by stating that the attacks had been necessary. The Trump administration referred to the air war against the Islamic State in Syria as the most precise and humane bombing campaign in history.

On November 13, the *New York Times* published its extensive investigation into the Baghuz bombing. Just as this massacre was not reported nor sparked outrage in the global mainstream media, it will also be forgotten, just as other massacres by the forces of freedom and civilization in distant countries have been forgotten.

The same newspaper recalled that the military admitted to the killing of ten innocent civilians (seven of them children) on August 10 in Kabul, Afghanistan, but this kind of public acknowledgment is unusual. More often, civilian deaths are not even counted in classified reports. Nearly a thousand strikes hit targets in Syria and Iraq in 2019 alone, using 4,729 bombs. However, the official military count of civilian deaths for the entire year is only 22. Over five years, 35,000 strikes were reported, but, for example, the bombings on March 18 that claimed the lives of nearly a hundred innocents are nowhere to be found.

In these attacks, several Syrian cities, including the regional capital, Raqqa, were reduced to rubble. Human rights organizations reported that the coalition caused thousands of civilian deaths during the war, but they are absent from official reports and the influential press of the world, except for exceptions like this NYT report. Even less so in military reports that evaluate and investigate their own actions.

According to the NYT on November 13, the CIA reported that the actions were carried out with full knowledge that the bombings could kill people, a discovery that might make them worthy of the next Nobel Prize in Physics. In Baghuz, one of the last battles against the territorial control

of ISIS, another group born from the chaos promoted by Washington in the Middle East, in this case, following the 2003 invasion of Iraq launched by the holy trinity of Bush-Blair-Aznar and based on the now-infamous lies later sold as intelligence errors. A war that left over a million dead as if it were nothing.

Since then, whenever a massacre by the civilizing forces comes to light, it is due to some *leak*. It is enough to recall another investigation, that of *USA Today* which two years ago revealed the events that took place in Afghanistan on August 22, 2008. After the Azizabad bombing, U.S. military officers (including Oliver North, convicted and pardoned for lying to Congress in the Iran-Contra scandal) reported that everything had gone perfectly, that the village had welcomed them with applause, that a Taliban leader had been killed, and that collateral damage had been minimal. They did not report that they had been met with stones, that dozens of people had died, including 60 children. A detail.

Meanwhile, Julian Assange remains imprisoned for the crime of reporting on similar war crimes. Meanwhile, the demigods continue to decide from the heavens who lives and who dies, whether through intelligent drones or their ideological police, the CIA. This very month, the respectable U.S. state radio network, NPR (I cannot say the same for the mafia of the major private networks), has reported that a year ago the CIA debated whether to kill or kidnap Julian Assange.

The convenient, cowardly, and recurring justification that these attacks are acts of "self-defense" is a joke in very poor taste. There is no act of self-defense when a country is occupying another country and bombing innocents who are later labeled as "collateral damage."

It goes without saying that no investigation will ever result in an effective conviction of those responsible for such atrocities, which never move the religious souls. If it were to happen, it would only be a matter of waiting for a presidential pardon, as every November, for Thanksgiving, the U.S. president pardons a white turkey, right in the middle of a massacre of millions of black turkeys.

No one knows, and surely no one will ever know, the names of those responsible for this massacre. What we do know is that in a few years they will return to their country and proudly wear medals on their chests that only they know the meaning of. We also know that upon seeing them, many patriots will thank them "for fighting for our freedom" and express gratitude "for their sacrifice in protecting this country." Many of these

grateful patriots are the same ones who wave the Confederate flag on their 4x4s, the only group that came close to destroying the existence of this country in the 19th century to maintain "the sacred institution of slavery."

Burn, erase, and lie with art

IN THE MOST FAMOUS PHOTOGRAPH of a special operation during Barack Obama's administration, taken on May 1, 2011, at 4:05 PM, the president appears to the side, as if his role in the capture of the former CIA man, Osama bin Laden, were minor. The Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, reinforces the female stereotype by covering her mouth in the face of an urgent or significant event, while a general adorned with medals seems to take control of the situation by typing on a laptop.

Next to the president's right knee, you can see a small recycled paper bag, like one from Publix, but with red stripes. It is one of the "*burn bags*" that have been used since the 1980s to completely destroy "sensitive documents." The document-burning policy was implemented after Iran managed to reconstruct a destroyed document from the U.S. embassy in 1979 and, especially, as new technologies made it easier to scan and reassemble any pile of shredded paper.

Fire was always more effective, though indiscreet. The famous photograph of the last U.S. helicopter fleeing Vietnam, taken by Dutch photographer Hugh Van Es, popularly known as an evacuation of the U.S. Embassy, actually occurred at the CIA's main operations base. A few hours before that takeoff, officials burned all the documents generated in recent years, making the work of historians more difficult, if not impossible. A small portion of those in the photograph managed to board. The untouchable Henry Kissinger wanted to rescue those who had participated in Operation Phoenix, a paramilitary group that from 1967 to 1971 kidnapped, tortured, and executed at least 26,000 Vietnamese civilians suspected of being communists.

Washington's concern, which had until then invested tens of millions of dollars in selling the Vietnam War to the American public, was not the assessment historians might make in a future full of narrative disputes, but rather the anti-war activists and American voters who were beginning to grow weary of so many failures despite the absolute freedom of

the U.S. armed forces and the CIA to bomb, spray, and execute the uncivilized without any restrictions.

If we jump forty years of other massacres and disappearances of evidence in the name of democracy, freedom, and Human Rights, we will inevitably land in Guantánamo, one of the many military bases Washington has scattered around the world since the seizure of Cuba's independence in 1898 and which, thanks to not being legally U.S. territory, the benevolent laws of the civilized nation do not apply. One of the known instances where the illegalities and practices of assassinating world leaders by the CIA were revealed was when the U.S. Senate committee, through the Church Committee, initiated a partial investigation into its interventions. All illegal. All unpunished *forever*. Not very different were the human rights violations in Iraq and the rest of the Middle East. Not very different practices were revealed in Guantánamo prison, one among many prisons the CIA maintains around the world to violate every imaginable law in the name of National Security and the impunity of the civilized laws of its country and its corporations.

According to the new and extensive report by the U.S. Senate published in 2015, this time led by Vietnam War veteran, senator, and Republican presidential candidate John McCain, the CIA destroyed the videos that recorded the systematic torture of detainees in Guantánamo.[285] The same report, 500 pages long, acknowledges that the methods of "enhanced interrogation" were brutal torture, far "*more cruel than what the CIA itself reported to Congress*."[286] Let us remember that the vast majority, almost all of the detainees, were innocent, according to various documents from the same U.S. government.

One of the main criticisms was not about morality but about utility. Before the attacks on the Twin Towers in 2001, the CIA had already resorted to torture to gather information (not coincidentally, a well-known practice of Latin American dictatorships and regimes spread across the world in the name of freedom, corporations, and their capital). As everyone knows, this unrestricted practice did not prevent what (if not for a planned or tolerated action against the symbolic center of the United States, New York) would have to be classified as yet another of the many resounding failures of The Agency. The CIA itself acknowledged in the 90s that torture did not produce reliable information, but rather the opposite.[287]

The report detailed some forms of torture, such as forced feeding or hydration through the anus of detained suspects and ice immersion, among other creations of sadism. One detainee was told that "*he would never make it to any court, because no matter what happened, the world would never find out what they had done to him*." In other cases, the detainee was informed that "*their families would suffer the consequences; their children would be beaten and their mothers raped before being slaughtered*."[288]

As if all these violations against *third-class humans* were not enough, according to the Senate report, the CIA lied and deceived the U.S. Senate and even the White House. It also leaked classified information to the press, information carefully selected to promote in public opinion the idea that its secret and torture programs had some value in keeping citizens safe from terrorist attacks.

It goes without saying that none of these damning reports from the same U.S. Senate about brutal human rights violations ended, and never, *ever*, will end in the prosecution of any agent, officer, general, or elevator operator of the CIA. The 2015 Senate report sums it up clearly: The CIA "*has rarely called attention to or punished its personnel for any abuse*."[289]

Bad leaks and good leaks

AMONG THE MOST SHOCKING CASES OF THE PUBLICATION of classified documents after the *Pentagon Papers* in 1971 are those of WikiLeaks by Julian Assange, the revelations of soldier Chelsea Manning, and CIA and NSA agent Edward Snowden. However, as journalist Glenn Greenwald observed in 2014, the leaks of classified documents to the press carried out by Washington for its own propaganda do not even raise suspicions.

When in 2013 the leak of thousands of secret NSA documents proved that Washington was not only spying on citizens of other countries in other countries (categorized as allies or enemies, that is, non-citizens, human subspecies), President Barack Obama went to the press to deny it. On June 18, Obama said: "*What I can assure you is that if you are a U.S. citizen, the NSA cannot listen to your phone calls… That's by law… Unless there is a court order* ." Apart from the fact that this "court order" consisted of occasionally filling out a form in a little electronic window that almost

automatically returned zero rejections, the president's words hid a darker reality: the collection of trillions of metadata is not classified as "direct listening" but rather the gathering and storing of who made a call, to whom, at what time, and from where. By combining three or four of these events, the personal stories of each individual emerge on their own: psychological problems, unwanted pregnancies, debts, visits to some pornographic site or donations to a union or activist group, and any other normal event in any citizen who has never broken any law but who can be used against them when necessary.

In 2012, Washington warned of the possibility that Chinese telecommunications companies, Huawei and ZTE, could be "violating U.S. laws," while the NSA was installing spy chips in *routers* and computers that U.S. companies exported to various countries. The *routers* exported by Cisco, for example, were infested with spyware, likely without the company's knowledge, as this practice was (or is) carried out by intercepting equipment ready for export and inserting *bugs* capable of taking over entire networks in other countries. The NSA also installed *back doors* in the computers of millions of Americans, intercepted the servers, *routers*, computers, and phones of tens of millions of Americans to collect and store their personal data. In the case of U.S. companies that manufacture in China, the law they are governed by is not Chinese but American. This is why the limitation of the independence of foreign companies, such as Chinese ones, often falls under a kind of "extraterritorial jurisdiction" of Washington's justice system, as happened with Huawei in 2018.[cxv]

Many people may not care that their computers and private lives are being spied on "because they have nothing to hide." On the contrary, due to a campaign to trivialize these illegalities carried out in the mainstream media and political discourse, many citizens who are spied on defend the practice from the perspective of those who violated their rights: "it was all to protect our freedom and security." The situation is entirely similar to that expressed in 1955 by the German pastor, former Nazi and victim of Nazism, Martin Niemöller, about cowardice and intellectual conformity:

[cxv] On December 1, 2018, Meng Wanzhou, an executive at the Chinese telecommunications company Huawei and daughter of its founder, was detained in Canada while in transit to Mexico by U.S. agents on charges of doing business with Iran (and later for financial fraud), for which she could face a prison sentence of over a decade without having violated any Canadian or U.S. law. ("The Real Financial Fraud," *Huffington Post*. Majfud, J. 05/24/2019).

When the Nazis came for the communists,
I remained silent,
because I was not a communist,

When they locked up the social democrats,
I remained silent,
because I was not a social democrat,

When they came for the trade unionists,
I did not speak out,
because I was not a trade unionist,

When they came for the Jews,
I did not speak out,
because I was not a Jew,

When they came for me,
there was no one left to speak out.

Among other things, today it is the understandable fear of the wage earner to disagree, discern, or protest. "Others, more daring, will do it for us." However, the fear of exercising their rights to privacy and digital oblivion helps legitimize these abuses of individual and collective freedom, in addition to the fact that the same data may one day in their future lives be used against them. On the other hand, this practice of indiscriminate spying, justified, as is predictable and an old acquaintance of history, as "necessary for national defense" and "to fight terrorism," has clearly failed in its stated purposes but has been used multiple times to gain economic advantages. In international matters, economic espionage is an old practice. The NSA's years-long spying on the cell phone of German Chancellor Angela Merkel can hardly be attributed to suspicions of terrorism against the United States. One of the NSA reports stamped with "*Special Source Operations*" dated February 2 to 8, 2013, refers to Mexico, Japan, and Venezuela, specifying its concerns about trade, domestic policies, and oil. This privileged information provides Washington with advantages when negotiating. According to Glenn Greenwald, the spying on Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff and Mexican President Peña Nieto in 2011, two

leaders with different ideologies, has a common factor: both countries, after Venezuela, are the most important oil producers in the region.[290]

The publication of the documents that proved the NSA's spying on nearly all U.S. citizens also showed that this super-secret agency also handed over this data to the Israeli military's Intelligence Corps, while complaining that Israel was not reciprocal but, on the contrary, spied on U.S. citizens, defining Israeli intelligence services as "*one of the most aggressive espionage operations against the United States*." A leaked document states that a single NIE (National Intelligence Estimate) to Israel "*the third most aggressive foreign intelligence service against the United States*." Two years after these revelations, in 2015, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu denied a report from the *Wall Street Journal*, leaked by the Obama White House, that Israel spied on U.S. negotiations with Iran and then handed over the data to Republicans in Congress: "*The state of Israel does not conduct espionage against the United States or other allies of Israel*," he told the press.[291]

When that same year, 2015, a report from the U.S. Senate revealed that the CIA had not only tortured innocent suspects in the illegal prison at Guantánamo but had also lied to the Senate and the White House, the CIA itself leaked part of its own classified documents to create the public perception that torture ("*enhanced interrogation*") had, in some way, been effective in keeping the country free from terrorist attacks.[292] This was proven false, though no investigative commission is needed to realize that none of the major historical events were ever detected by the CIA and its "intelligence."

On page 401 of the same report, it concludes that "*the CIA leaked classified information to some journalists about its still-secret Detention and Interrogation program, which was later published*." The goal was to clean up its image. The Assanges and Greenwalds of power were never pursued or brought to justice or any kind of court. For example, "*as an internal email states, the CIA* [redacted] *never opened any investigation into the book* The CIA at War *by Ronald Kessler, even though it contained classified information… Legal advisor John Rezzo wrote that this decision was based on the fact that the CIA's relationship with writer Kessler had been blessed by the Agency's director. Another example is when CIA officers and members of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence observed that an article written by Douglas Jehl in the New York Times contained a significant amount of classified information*." Despite the illegal and privileged access to secret information, not

coincidentally, the same Senate committee concludes that "*both Kessler's book and Jehl's article contain false claims about the effectiveness of the CIA's interrogation program*."[293] Before polishing his articles, Jehl provided a copy to CIA agents, even assuring them that the text emphasized the virtues of the techniques of the secret "enhanced interrogation" program. Ronald Kessler did the same in 2007 for his new book: not only did he give the CIA the draft, but he also included the changes and criticisms the agency had returned to him.[cxvi]

The list of achievements detailed by the two journalists (capture of terrorists, prevention of attacks) is simply false. But the Agency's propaganda machinery needed "*to make 'our story' public to create public opinion in Congress*." As early as April 2005, the Agency had selected convenient information to prepare the officers who were to be interviewed by journalist Tom Brokaw of NBC News about the Interrogation Program in secret prisons abroad. Later it would be revealed that the *Dateline NBC* program not only contained classified information but also fabricated stories about CIA achievements in capturing terrorists that were not even recorded by the agency itself. According to the director of the Counterterrorism Center, Phillips Mud, if the CIA couldn't sell itself well to the public, Congress might "*limit our authority and mess with our budget; we need to make it clear that what we're doing is a good thing; we must be more aggressive out there: either we tell our version of the story or they'll eat us alive*."[294] To a large extent, the CIA's competition with the FBI and the mutual theft of authority and credit is based on professional jealousy and an old struggle over budgets, despite sharing the same political and geopolitical ideology of dominating the always-dangerous "others below." In an email from April 15, 2015, to several CIA lawyers, an officer expressed concern about this practice of the Agency itself leaking classified information. No response is known.

What is known is that the CIA destroyed the videos it had recorded of the torture sessions, just as, after some time, it usually burns classified documents that, if leaked by more independent individuals, would not

[cxvi] The revelation of Operation Mockingbird by the U.S. Senate's Church Commission documented the common practice by the CIA of planting articles in the dominant press of the United States and Latin America, as well as promoting and even funding books and translations of ideologically favorable books. Many other academic investigations confirmed other cases, such as that of journalist John Barron, whose first book *KGB: The Secret Work of Soviet Secret Agents* published by the *Reader's Digest* (*Selections*, in Spanish) in 1974 was funded by the CIA and became an international *best seller*. To mention just one case.

leave a good impression of the machinery, and the specter of budget cuts could come knocking again. The same Senate committee report, in its appendix data, compared the CIA's statements to Congress with the CIA's own documents and concluded that its agents lied to legislators and to the public. Naturally, without legal consequences and without leaving or barely leaving a mark on the conscience of Public Opinion.

What is the fate, the use that future governments, future paranoids, and future Artificial Intelligence analyses will make of those trillions of personal data points from so many hundreds of millions of citizens? For me, the answer is inevitable if we continue the same logic of individual espionage and the manipulation of collective truth: in the not-too-distant future, DNA analyses and psychological diagnoses of individuals will be used to classify people. For example, those diagnosed with "Oppositional Defiant Disorder" (ODD, or, as it is also known in a "second" psychological interpretation, "Disorder of the Craving for Freedom"), will automatically be harassed and marginalized, not only in their political possibilities but also in their professional ones.

As if that weren't enough, espionage systems have the ability to search for information in all those files we thought we had deleted from the clouds and even from the hard drives of our private computers. This information has been illegally leaked by dissidents, yet it is also known that the same secret agencies, including the FBI, have practiced mass extortion by allowing the population to know about the mass surveillance they conduct. This not only creates public self-censorship but also private self-censorship and, beyond that, self-censorship of thought, as in the worst moments of the European Inquisition.

The manipulation of culture

AS WE SAW IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS, the secret agencies are the *invisible hand* of the policies of hegemonic powers under their corporations, not only as espionage agencies to collect data and generate "national security reports" but as *parallel governments* that execute with complete impunity all kinds of plans and projects on their own and in the name of a president who only learns of the results to protect him from any scandal if something goes wrong. The ideal of the system is that this president will

disappear in four or eight years. The interruption of the liberal democracy system favors and protects the permanent powers. Moreover, if any war, any invasion, any coup d'état goes wrong, the new government can wash its hands of the previous one with a moderate dose of criticism and a radical continuity of the same policy.

Just as in 1961 the fiasco of the Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba brought the CIA to the brink of dissolution by President John F. Kennedy, who blamed it for the failure and (according to Cuban agent Antonio Veciana, among others) paid with his life for such a threat, all agencies, which base their existence on *security*, whether state or private, need *insecurity* to exist or to maintain a certain budgetary level approved by the current congresses. Whether out of self-love, vanity, or simple survival, they also need to promote themselves like any private company. This is known by all institutions that compete for a substantial portion of the government budget and for the poorest volunteers who are drawn to the business of secrecy and war for some reason. How to stimulate this positive perception of something that no one really knows what it consists of? One way is through direct advertising in the media, something that is common when it comes to attracting poor young people to serve in the army or the marines. Another way, perhaps the most effective, is to proceed through popular culture.

In previous chapters, we focused on the practices of the CIA (such as *Operation Mockingbird*) to create opinion in the Americas through the creation of fake news that its agents and writers planted every day throughout the continent. Books and culture were not immune to this massive and multimillion-dollar manipulation by the champions of "free competition." In many cases, laws were modified to limit their action within the borders of the United States, none of which prevented the Agency from skipping the laws like an Olympic athlete in an obstacle race.

In the late 60s, this channeling of money was carried out using a hundred private organizations called "orphans," such as the National Council of Churches and others that assisted in propaganda purposes as well as in the organization and financing of favorable ("anti-communist") workers' unions in various countries. The Congress for Cultural Freedom, another cultural and propaganda subsidiary of the CIA, funded various "intellectual magazines" like *Encounter*. In fact, an agent of the agency had become its editor when editors Frank Kermode and Stephen Spender resigned to avoid participating in this manipulation. Using other inoculated

organizations, such as the National Student Association, they infiltrated universities in Latin American countries like Bolivia and the Dominican Republic. In an extremely naive manner, TIME magazine reported that "*in some situations, the functions of mere aid or propaganda turned into massive political operations, such as the violent general strike that helped overthrow the Marxist government of Cheddi Jagan in British Guiana three years ago. This revolt was funded by the Public Services International, an organization backed by the CIA, whose goal has been to organize government workers into independent unions worldwide*."[295] In other words, we secretly organized the "independent unions" of other countries.

As the same TIME article warned, "perhaps the CIA's most significant contribution has not been based on money but on unconventional and imaginative ideas." However, the availability of dollars was never a concern.[cxvii] Among their imaginative contributions, we can imagine, is the continued shaping of public opinion through interference with the "free press," the world of culture, and, above all, entertainment.

In her book *Spies, Lies, and Algorithms* (2022), Stanford University professor Amy B. Zegart reminds us that, in today's digital world, only 20 percent of the information collected by secret agencies like the NSA or the CIA comes from the agencies themselves and remains classified.[cxviii] The rest is OSINT, that is, the processing of information available from open sources, most often as voluntary donations from citizens themselves on their social media.

To prove this, it's enough to recall obvious facts that often go unnoticed by the general public. For example, from 1986 to 1994 in the United States, the popular television series *L.A. Law* (in Latin America

[cxvii] In 2022, the National Intelligence Program (not including the military intelligence budget) amounted to 60 billion dollars, three times the entire economy of Nicaragua or Mozambique.

[cxviii] Professor Zegart is also a member of the board of the powerful Kratos Defense & Security Solutions, a private company that provides services on the development of military weapons to the government. In 2016, this private company received 29 million dollars from Washington to develop directed energy weapons (DEW), which can be used to attack "enemies" (such as protesters in a street demonstration) with microwave waves. These weapons began to be developed during the late Cold War, and the effects of their use are primarily on the brain, which in the Western press is known as "Havana Syndrome" due to cases reported by U.S. diplomats in Cuba in 2016. In the 1950s and 1960s, the pathologist hired by the CIA, Charles Freeman Geschickter, had already proposed the use of concentrated radiation to damage the brain from within. The CIA illegally funded other similar experiments, such as in Canada (led by Dr. Donald Ewen Cameron) among others, partially revealed by the U.S. Congress in 1975.

marketed as *Justice Will Be Served*) caused a boom in applications to law schools. In 1986, the movie *Top Gun*, starring a supposed rebel pilot, Tom Cruise, sent a flood of applications to the Navy, to the point that recruitment offices had to set up tables outside movie theaters. Nothing new, if we consider the stimulating effect that chivalric novels had on the conqueror of Mexico, Hernán Cortés, as detailed in *Don Quixote* a century later.

In one of her personal statistics (always from a perspective favorable to spy agencies like the NSA and the CIA), Professor Zegart found that 58 percent of those who consumed spy movies had a favorable opinion of the NSA, while this percentage dropped to 34 percent among those who did not watch these films. Among consumers of spy fiction, 44 percent approved of the agency snooping on our phones and internet activity, while only 29 percent of those who did not engage with such fiction approved of the same. From the data collected by Professor Zegart, something even more interesting emerges: 23 percent of those who consumed spy series and movies believed that the NSA told the truth about its spying on ordinary citizens' activities, while only 15 percent of those who did not consume such fiction thought the same. In other words, the majority of those who consumed spy fiction had a positive opinion of secret agencies, while a small minority believed they could tell the truth about their activities. (Hit me and call me Martha.)

These super-secret agencies, which receive from Washington as much money per year as an entire Latin American country produces, are not just dedicated to collecting data. As history shows to the point of exhaustion, they are creators of public opinion. Or at least they are shareholders in that multi-billion-dollar business. Even when it comes to managing their own image. Zegart acknowledges that "*today the FBI, the CIA, and the Department of Defense have public relations offices and coordinate with the entertainment industry, working with writers and producers in Hollywood to portray a favorable image of their activities*."[296] The CIA directly intervenes in movie scripts. The same has been done through their own offices in Los Angeles by the army, navy, and air force. Films like *Zero Dark Thirty* (*The Darkest Night*), were funded with CIA money, and their agents oversaw the screenplay. When the film premiered in 2012, critics pointed out the flattering nature of the production to the extent that even the CIA director, Michael Morell, had to step in, stating that it was largely a work

of art that did not necessarily have to adhere to reality. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, the film won an Oscar that same year.

In 2012, the former CIA lawyer, Jeffrey Smith, admitted in an interview with NPR the exploitation of the most basic instincts in shaping public opinion and sensibilities: "*we needed something that would appeal to a broader audience and, honestly, had a bit of sex*." The interviewer, Steve Henn, referring to the company created by the agency itself, In-Q-Tel (funded by taxpayer money), joked: "*that's why they called it Q*." The company In-Q-Tel was established as a non-profit organization, but its General Manager, Christopher Darby, was earning a million dollars a year at the time. According to Smith, "*salaries in the high-tech community, among successful people, are truly extraordinary*." However, according to Henn himself, the successful company "*never became self-sufficient, which is why it receives $56 million from the government every year*.[297] The mercenaries of capitalism need the state like no one else.

Social relations and *astroturfing*

THE MASTER OF MODERN PROPAGANDA, Edward Bernays (author of changes in the lifestyle of Americans, the breaking of Washington's neutrality in World War I, plots and coups in Latin America, and the book *Propaganda*) acknowledged that he had invented the term "Public Relations" because the word "propaganda" had fallen into disrepute. This discrediting occurred during World War II, when the Nazis became the prodigal students of Bernays himself.

One of the principles that can be inferred from Bernays' practices and writings is what is now called *astroturfing*. Traditionally, in the United States, popular organizations (unions, civil rights movements, community organizations for a specific political cause) are called "*grassroots organizations*," referring to something that grows from the root of the grass, something that "grows from the ground up." Its translation into Spanish is "movimiento de base," but the metaphor of the grass, the plant in English, remains when analysts observe that many of these popular organizations are actually a false substitute for a true popular organization. On the contrary, they are facades created by their more powerful adversaries, hence the idea of *astroturf*, that is, artificial grass. The name comes from a well-

known commercial brand of plastic grass, AstroTurf, patented by Monsanto in 1965.

This was one of Edward Bernays' central strategies: never say that the product we want to sell is the best and the competition is bad. We must convince others, especially some intellectual authority, such as scientists, doctors, or religious leaders, to say what we want them to say about our product, whether it's Lucky Strike cigarettes, Beech-Nut ham, or a coup in "some shithole country," according to former President Donald Trump.

Since then, *PR* (public relations, but also press releases) has become a multi-million dollar business dedicated to manipulating public opinion. Bernays himself had stated that "*propaganda is the executive organ of the invisible government*" and that "*the conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country*."[298]

Today, the business of Public Opinion has multiplied several times over. Major opinion-making companies spend billions of dollars each year to tell ordinary citizens what they should think. Naturally, as it has been since ancient times, though in an increasingly sophisticated and scientific manner, this manufactured opinion almost always benefits the power elites. In our case, they are not feudal lords but something similar: The Successful Billionaires Who Created Our World in Seven Days and whom the failures at the bottom (the 99 percent) want to punish with taxes or, worse, question their legitimacy. This legitimacy requires a narrative, a favorable public opinion that confirms and secures it.

After the symbolic work comes the practical aspect (the first, exercised mainly by the media, and the second, by politics): the micro-elite, with some visible faces like Jeff Bezos or Elon Musk, must be confirmed in governments and congresses, always hijacking and bribing the "representatives of the people," who do not represent people but fears and desires—the two raw materials of capitalism and its media.

One of the most powerful mega-corporations specialized in public opinion manipulation (Public Relations) and with branches worldwide is Edelman. Since euphemisms are important, they often present themselves as "consultants." Never consultants for the people but for the guild of millionaires, the ones capable of assembling gatherings of four or five

individuals who own half the wealth of a country and who can easily, in meetings livened with black-tie attire, caviar, and bat excrement, decide on one of those capital strikes they call "investment flight" and which terrify both people and responsible presidents alike.

However, these mercenary companies dedicate themselves to creating "grassroots movements," exactly as the CIA has done since its inception in every country it has set foot in, creating popular uprisings against non-aligned governments or inoculating and hijacking dissident groups (in Latin America, leftist groups, such as critical publications and workers' and students' unions). Similarly, Edelman, like other public relations companies, never spared any effort in creating controlled "popular outrage," passing them off as spontaneous gatherings when, in reality, they were advertising strategies in favor of their clients. One such example was the group "Walmart Workers' Families" created in late 2005, a group that supposedly represented the interests of Walmart workers but was actually organized by Edelman to support the noble cause of the Walton family, the richest in the United States, against the temptation of their workers to form a union, a right enshrined in U.S. law and rarely exercised due to "anti-communist" propaganda and the extortion of large corporations.[299]

Edelman, in the name of the people, was hired by major oil groups to twist public opinion against "theories of climate change" (no discrediting campaign is complete without using the word "theory," even when applied to science) and, in this way, influence the approval of laws favorable to the oil industry or block those that could limit the profits of their clients.[cxix]

But *astroturfing* is not just a business of large private companies. The invisible hand of the market, the secret arm of capitalism (funded by Washington and public money), has a long history in the genre of mudslinging to create public opinion. A recent example came from the U.S. Army itself, when it was exposed by WikiLeaks. To discredit WikiLeaks, the U.S. Army tried to get the rebellious organization to publish false revelations.[cxx]

[cxix] Apart from the Mormon Church, Starbucks, and other major businesses, one of its clients is the American Petroleum Institute (API), which groups 600 oil corporations in the United States, dedicated to creating popular consensus against the idea of possible Climate Change. Not coincidentally, in 1969 it moved its offices to Washington DC.

[cxx] WikiLeaks was declared an "enemy of the state" and, consequently, was to be destroyed, according to a secret document from 2008. See Greenwald, Glenn. *No Place to Hide: Edward Snowden, the NSA, and the U.S. Surveillance State*. Macmillan, 2014, p. 13.

The defamation attempt was thwarted by a WikiLeaks revelation that showed the U.S. Army trying to get WikiLeaks to publish false information.

State espionage, private manipulation

UNTIL THE COMMERCIALIZATION OF THE INTERNET in the 1990s, the common way to spy on groups and individuals with political ideas different from those of Washington and Wall Street was through the secret break-in of offices and homes to steal documents. This practice was common on university campuses, where some authorities would provide keys to professors' offices, or facilitate the forced entry into the offices of newspapers, dissident groups, or the homes of individuals suspected of opposing a war or invasion.[cxxi]

In 2009, Eric Schmidt, one of the owners of Google, was interviewed by CNBC. When questioned about the collection of users' personal data, Schmidt responded: "*If you have something that you don't want anyone to know, maybe you shouldn't be doing it in the first place; but if you really need that kind of privacy, the reality is that search engines, including Google, have been keeping that information for some time… It's important that in the United States we are all subject to the Patriot Act*."[300] Of course, his personal privacy and the financial privacy of the company were never in question. As CNET observed in 2013, "*your personal life now belongs to Facebook; the personal life of its CEO is his private matter*."[301] To preserve his right to privacy, like any citizen, Mark Zuckerberg bought four mansions around his own in Palo Alto, California, for a total of $30 million.

To make it less feudal, in 2015 the United Nations declared online privacy a Human Right. At least on paper. But if we descend to the world of mortals, things are entirely different. All major operating systems, such as those from Microsoft and Apple, have *backdoors* ("back doors"), thanks to which the most powerful governments in the world have access to the

[cxxi] Sara Murray, for example, used to work in Detroit with refugees who had escaped from military dictatorships in Central America. One morning in March 1985, she entered her MICAH office and realized it had been ransacked, and several files were missing. A Puerto Rican taxi driver warned her that the *death squads* were after her: "*Don't you realize your family could be kidnapped…? They will kill you and make your death look like an accident. You'd better stop working for those people before you're considered a traitor*".

personal computers of every mortal inhabiting this planet, without needing to ask for their access key. According to the creator of Linux (Linus Torvalds, when questioned by the European Parliament in 2013), these closed programs have hundreds of *backdoors* in the form of *bugs*, flaws, or pseudo-errors in software. These systems are closed, meaning secret, inaccessible to their users, and in fact, the mere physical or digital exploration of the operating system of a phone or computer by its owner is classified as a crime. Because their owners are not their owners. When we buy an electronic device, it doesn't truly belong to us completely, just as the emails many assume to be private don't belong to us: everything we write or store on a *hoster* (server) that isn't in our home is the property of the server's owner, whether it's Gmail, Yahoo, Dropbox, or any institutional server of a government or private company. Besides being born with a *backdoor*, during their lives our personal devices can acquire others like *Sub7*, a Trojan virus, like catching a cold that never fully goes away until we die.

According to the secret documents leaked by Edward Snowden in 2013, Microsoft collaborated with the NSA by granting it free access to the private communications of hundreds of millions of users through SkyDrive, Skype, and Outlook. Not without irony, the company marketed itself with false and hypocritical propaganda: "*It's important to us that you have control over who can access your personal data*."

When Microsoft bought Skype in 2011, it assured its 650 million users that "*Skype is committed to respecting your privacy and the confidentiality of your personal data*" while working permanently with the NSA to facilitate its access to those same user data. When in 2012 the company updated Outlook to replace the original Hotmail email service, it promoted the change as a measure to increase privacy through the encryption (*encryption*) of messages. Immediately, the Social Source Operations (SSO) section, in a secret document dated August 12, expressed concern over the loss of access to private chats, which was quickly resolved so that the NSA could regain access to messages and communications despite this encryption. The FBI also achieved the same privilege through Microsoft's collaboration with the Data Intercept Technology Unit (DITU).[302]

Several documents leaked by Edward Snowden reveal various NSA programs to intrude into the private lives of any mortal on earth. One of these programs is called X-KEYSCORE (secret agencies have always loved uppercase letters), through which their spies and employees enjoy live-

tracking the digital activities of any victim they decide to spy on. They watch, in real time, their monitors, their private chats on social media with family, friends, and lovers; they save their browsing history, their Google searches, their worries, their illnesses, their desires and hopes, and all those things that belong to the lesser beings who don't believe there's a god watching them. They even launch attacks against the traffic of dissident groups or activists to slow down or disrupt any politically undesirable event. According to Snowden, a *insider*, even judges and the President of the United States could be spied on without issue. In other words, what in other books we call "The Shadow Government."

Nothing new. Since 2007, through the PRISM program, the DITU has been collecting private data from users of Facebook, Yahoo, Google, and other platforms and passing it on to the NSA. In turn, the NSA transfers the same information to its subsidiaries, one of which is the CIA, making the supposed separation of jurisdictions (domestic vs. foreign) established by laws as elastic as chewing gum.

All under the legality of the Patriot Act of 2001, a law written and voted on in the desperation following 9/11, with the excuse of intercepting terrorist messages to save a nation that was never in danger from any terrorist act. Never before "*a catalytic and catastrophic event, something like a new Pearl Harbor*" (as stated by the conservative group Project for the New American Century, PNAC, in 1998) had such a devastating effect on the American people and such a fruitful outcome for the superpowers that have ruled over foreign nations for centuries.[cxxii]

No event revived and benefited the dying culture of the Cold War and its multi-billion-dollar agencies and influence networks as much as 9/11 did. Thanks to these attacks, not only was the long-desired total war against Iraq and the Middle East launched—coincidentally, countries rich in oil—but "patriotic laws" were urgently passed that made the sale of American citizens' freedom in exchange for a fictional security possible. On the contrary, none of these illegal surveillance programs (coded,

[cxxii] Among the members of PNAC in the late 1990s were the neoconservative writer Robert Kagan, professors Francis Fukuyama and Donald Kagan, future Vice President Dick Cheney, future Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld, future Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, and future National Security Advisor to Donald Trump, John Bolton. (Kagan, Donald, and Gary Schmitt. *Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century*. Project for the New American Century, 2000.)

mysterious, massive, and multi-billion-dollar) managed to prevent a single terrorist attack.

In the face of Snowden's revelations, President Obama and most politicians of the time justified the surveillance as necessary "*for the security of the nation*" but, at the same time, the president was forced to establish an investigative commission, the Review Group on Intelligence and Communications Technologies. Not without irony, this same commission concluded: "*Our investigation shows that the information obtained through telephone metadata surveillance was not essential to preventing terrorist attacks and could have been easily obtained in a timely manner using conventional court orders*."[303] As journalist Glenn Greenwald notes, a study by the New American Foundation reached the same conclusion. In fact, it became clear that mass surveillance did nothing to prevent the terrorist attack at the Boston Marathon in 2012, nor did it detect several explosive attempts, such as the Detroit airplane incident or the failed plan to plant a bomb in Times Square in New York. It also didn't help prevent any of the mass shootings that shook the country during those years and continue today, as if nothing had happened. The same can be said for any of the most high-profile international attacks.

None of this should be surprising. After all, they couldn't prevent, or didn't want to prevent, the attacks on the Twin Towers in 2001 (beyond some CIA reports on the matter that, for some obscure reason, were shared with other state agencies only when it was too late) and, when two years later they reported on the danger of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, it all turned out to be, according to President George Bush himself, "*an intelligence error*" that left a million dead and half a continent in absolute chaos. The only intelligence error was that of the people who were manipulated like kindergarten children. Including journalists, religious leaders, and even the most skeptical intellectuals, who considered the strong indications of a self-attack or, at least, a "let them attack us," to be mere details: a plane crashing into the Pentagon, but no security camera from the safest place in the world managed to record it;[cxxiii] Mr. Donald Rumsfeld ordered

[cxxiii] Like all major media outlets, even today the History Channel summarizes this speculation as follows: "*The initial video footage and photos taken from the scene did not seem to show much evidence of the plane's wreckage. Conspiracy theorists argue that this is evidence that the Pentagon was not attacked by Flight 77 but by a missile*". Apart from the fact that no remains of the plane or the victims were found in the area, the evidence supporting the claim that no plane crashed into the Pentagon is dismissed with phrases like "*the video footage and*

to keep U.S. fighter jets busy in a useless exercise against potential airplane hijackers on the very day of September 11th, while 19 foreign students hijacked four Boeing 767s and 757s with box cutters; police and firefighters reporting strong explosions even before the hijacked planes crashed; Larry Silverstein, the billionaire owner of the World Trade Center complex, who had added terrorism insurance coverage months earlier (and for which he received $4.55 billion), who had changed his routine to avoid any of the seven buildings that day, the only seven buildings destroyed, all part of the WTC, the same philanthropist who increased his fortune with the reconstruction of the destroyed area… And a long etcetera that only served to repeat the same narrative that had been repeated since the taking of indigenous territories at the end of the 18th century, the taking of Mexican territories, the possession of the Caribbean, the expansion of interventions and hundreds of military bases around the world: "*we were attacked without reason and we must defend ourselves… We will never forget*."

Instead, those failed super-secret agencies were and are essential for collecting trillions of private communications that are used for not so much political but ideological and economic purposes. It is no mere coincidence that communication giants like AT&T and Booz Allen Hamilton hired former NSA agents.[304] By 2018, after being caught red-handed, Microsoft assured its customers: "*we value, protect, and defend your privacy*."[305] In this effort to rebuild trust destroyed by their own lies, the company continues to insist and rely on the fragile memory of consumers, who are no longer even considered citizens, much less peoples: "*Microsoft defends your data […] We believe that all government requests for your data should be directed to you. We do not grant any government direct or unrestricted access to our customers' data. At Microsoft, we have principles and are transparent about how we respond to data requests. Because we believe you have control over your privacy, we will not disclose data to any government, except when you indicate or when required by law*."[306]

For these and other reasons, many users and computer experts placed their dwindling hopes for freedom and privacy in the digital world in open-source operating systems (OS), such as Linux. But there is nothing that the invisible power cannot corrupt or, at least, taint with doubts, attempts at corruption, discrediting the most serious criticisms (often under

---

photos taken from the scene did not seem to show much evidence of the plane's wreckage…" ("5 compelling 9/11 conspiracy theories", Convert Case. convertcase.net.)

the guise of "conspiracy theories"), which are never called that but rather "necessary actions to protect national security."

Linus Torvalds, the creator of Linux, admitted before the European Parliament that "*when my eldest son was asked if the NSA had contacted him about a 'backdoor' in Linux, his answer was 'No,' while at the same time nodding his head. He protected himself from any legal issues. He gave the correct answer, but everyone understood that the NSA had contacted him*."[307]

Of course, even if Big Brother doesn't get something the easy way, he'll get it the hard way. One of those Plan Bs involves installing *malware* (viruses) on millions of computers (which, by the way, will benefit the antivirus business against minor viruses). One of those teams, with almost unlimited budgets, is the Computer Network Exploitation (CNE), which has the ability to see in real time the activity of any computer that no longer belongs to its owner, even when it is disconnected from the internet or its history is deleted. In 2016, the *New York Times* reported, not without irony, on the ease of spying on someone else's phone. All you needed was a lot of money, something that big companies and secret agencies like the NSA or CIA have in abundance (because they live off the state): "*Want to invisibly spy on 10 people from their iPhones without their knowledge? Want to know what they write, what they listen to, what messages they send and from where? No problem. It will only cost you $650,000, plus a $500,000 installation fee. Plus, with the Israeli NSO Group, you can spy on more people if you wish. Check the company's price list*."[308] Probably the most expensive, most effective, and most well-known spyware in the world is the program *Pegasus*, developed and sold by the same private company. In 2017, for example, fifty politicians and pro-independence activists in Catalonia were spied on using this powerful program.

The reason Linux is more protected against espionage by governments, secret agencies, and large corporations is similar to why Wikipedia is more reliable than a major media outlet when it comes to distributing propaganda: Linux is "open source," it's free, it doesn't depend on the whims of a board of directors, and it isn't owned by anyone. "*Linux is a customized platform based on the common kernel, and if a distribution has a bug or is hacked, it is detected by the community faster than MS*."[309] When a bug or a secret attack on the system occurs, the "*white hat community*" ("ethical hacker community") acts as quickly and effectively as the anonymous editors of Wikipedia do to repair an attack on one of its millions of articles. In fact, the most powerful governments in the world trust open-

source systems like Linux or outdated closed systems like Windows XP more. But, in any case, they benefit more from the closed systems of companies that monopolize the market, like Microsoft or Apple.

One of the strategies used by journalists and researchers to avoid being spied on by these government super agencies or private companies is not only to work without an internet connection but to do so on virgin computers, meaning those that have never been connected to the internet. The chances that a new computer hasn't been inoculated with a *backdoor* or linked to an unknown user are much higher than in any other case. As with almost everything in our hyper-technological world, the best strategy against espionage and control by the great powers lies in "*low tech*": the more primitive, the less sophisticated a technology is, the safer it is. Like, for example, a pencil and paper. Of course, communication (if it truly aims to have any social meaning in this world) will sooner or later require digital technology and the network of networks. This is the case, for example, of journalist Julian Assange, former NSA agent Edward Snowden, former U.S. soldier Chelsea Manning, and Lieutenant Colonel Dean W. Korsak.[310]

According to former CIA and NSA computer specialist Edward Snowden, the trend of the super-secret agencies is to "*build a global system whose goal is the elimination of privacy, so that no communication can be established without the NSA being able to intercept and store it for later analysis*."[311] Snowden himself compares visiting any website to sending a traditional postcard, where not only the recipient's and sender's addresses are exposed, but the message as well. Now, just as the privacy of ordinary mortals has no value for the world's most powerful secret agencies, their own privacy does. This is why the U.S. military created the Tor browser (*The Onion Router*) to protect its own espionage, and it eventually escaped their control, which is why today, as an open-source tool, it is the most effective anonymous browser in the world, capable of protecting ordinary users against its own creators. Both the NSA and the British GCHQ have spent years attacking this network, which complicates their work of global and mass espionage.

The violation of privacy is not only an illegal act, not only an abuse of power, not only a violation of a human right, but also an instrument of intimidation, a strategy of external self-censorship, especially for those who think differently. It is a way of dehumanizing all those individuals who try to exercise the right to the truth.

OSINT, Open-Source Intelligence

FOR A LONG TIME, THE TRADITION OF ESPIONAGE relied on the secret collection of privileged information from governments, infiltrated organizations, and individuals of interest. In any case, it was and still is always about privileged information. As we saw in the case of the CIA and other espionage agencies, the work in the shadows was not limited to the collection of information but also to the execution, often independently and without consultation, of certain illegal plans and policies, such as the spread of fake news, coups d'état, or the assassination of foreign leaders.

This practice has not changed or diminished; on the contrary, it has intensified. However, a new intelligence practice, both public and private, has accelerated exponentially in the Internet Age: Open Source Intelligence (OSINT). Its origin almost coincides with the birth of the CIA. A few years earlier, its predecessor, the OSS, had begun analyzing obituary notices in Nazi newspapers in Switzerland to estimate the deaths of high-ranking Nazis. At that time, they cataloged 45,000 pages of newspapers per week. Later, during the Cold War, U.S. intelligence services maintained thousands of subscriptions to Soviet newspapers and magazines, which could be considered a precursor to Big Data.

In recent years, various studies and psychological experiments have shown that the invasion of privacy through espionage or even through cameras in family bathrooms causes initial discomfort, but *the subject under observation eventually gets used to it*. In our time, the universe of private information donated by social media users and the internet in general has become a goldmine for secret agencies, whether private or state-owned.

By 2020, OSINT had become an invaluable source of information (for action, prevention, and propaganda). A former director of the DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency) defined it this way: "The explosion of publicly available information is changing the global intelligence system... It is changing how we instrument, how we organize, how we institutionalize everything."[312]

According to documents revealed by Edward Snowden, the NSA has a program called PRISM, through which it collects and stores tons of

information directly from major private companies such as Microsoft, Facebook, Yahoo, Skype, Paltalk, AOL, YouTube, Apple, and Google. Another civilian espionage program for *big data* is Boundless Informant, through which its officials can locate information about every U.S. citizen and any individual elsewhere on the planet, all neatly organized by geographic location.[313]

All in the name of democracy and freedom.

Rebellions and counter-rebellions inoculated

ACCORDING TO THOUSANDS OF LEAKED DOCUMENTS from WikiLeaks, some dictatorships in the Arab world that faced the so-called "Arab Spring" hired sophisticated espionage technology developed and sold by powerful Western companies, such as the Italian Area SpA and the French Amesys and Qosmos, capable of intercepting Skype communications, decoding access keys, and reading emails. With clients like the police and the military, "*this secret industry has thrived since September 11, 2001, and moves billions of dollars a year*." In turn, this technology and the data of millions of people, stored in a recently built NSA facility in Utah at a cost of 1.5 billion dollars, are used by agencies like the CIA to operate drones that often eliminate "bad people" in distant countries, including children and future terrorists, often labeled in their reports and headlines in the mainstream media as "collateral damage."

Netezza, a technology company from Massachusetts, bought software from IISI (Intelligence Integration Systems, Inc., another company from the same state), and sold it to the CIA. IISI itself admitted that the software for locating victims had errors of up to 12 meters, which is why it sued Netezza to prevent the use of this software. The company's founder, Rich Zimmerman, testified in court that "*they (the CIA) want to kill people with my software, which doesn't work with the necessary precision*."[314]

Years earlier, other super companies from the "Free World" also made money by selling cutting-edge technology to the communist government of China and other regimes considered dictatorships, to suppress dissent within their borders.[315]

The former CIA and NSA employee, Edward Snowden, revealed in 2013 an old strategy of the secret agencies, now adapted to the digital

and virtual world: they have always sought candidates in universities, but by then they had resolved that old institutional frustration recruiting skilled young people who had spent their lives in front of a monitor, especially those who, for some reason, like Snowden himself, hadn't finished high school or hadn't been able to attend college and felt frustrated, alienated. Easy candidates, as they were individuals who, like young soldiers, knew how to do one thing very well and had no idea about the rest of the world, nor did they usually ask themselves ethical or philosophical questions. What better than talented young people who hadn't had time to question anything on the progressive campuses of the world and felt resentful toward all of them?[cxxiv]

But some, like Snowden himself, had broken the mold and dedicated themselves to the dignity of conscience over the conveniences of power.

The Prison Without Walls

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CENTURY, TWO THINGS stood out to me about my new students in Georgia and later in Pennsylvania. First, faith as the primary instrument of judgment. The second referred to an unspoken assumption: every time the students read a work of fiction, their analyses consisted of deducing what the author had meant and what they wanted their readers to do.

Once I lost my patience: "We don't know what the author was thinking while writing this work, but it's very likely they didn't give a damn about what we might think; now, if they did care, we can still read it without caring." Art (like science from another perspective) explores, exposes the infinite complexity of humanity, including moral and political conflicts, but it doesn't have to be a religious, moralistic, or proselytizing text.

[cxxiv] In the United States, the political and narrative divide is not defined between the rich and the poor but between the educated and the uneducated. The psychological reason likely lies in the fact that an individual who drops out of school at twenty loses hope of earning a doctorate in any field but never loses hope of becoming the next Elon Musk with their lawn-mowing business. Or almost never, because sooner or later, we all experience the "Loman syndrome," named after Arthur Miller's character in "Death of a Salesman." This competitive obsession is rooted in the culture created by capitalist man, which in the United States is expressed in many ways, even in language, such as the well-known insult of calling someone a "loser."

Both intellectual attitudes likely stemmed from the training of the readers, of the individuals in the churches that almost all of them attended every Sunday since childhood. In the case of a text like the Bible, the Quran, or the Torah, it's reasonable to think that readers would seek "what the author meant" and "what they want from us"—and that they would hate each other over the interpretations.

This intellectual training must have migrated from the churches to politics and now attempts to do so in education, with all kinds of laws passed to limit academic freedom in the name of liberty.

How is this contradiction understood? In the same way, the slave system combined Christian love with the exploitation of millions of men and women condemned by the color of their skin. If we consider that modern corporations are the continuation of slave masters and that workers who rent themselves out for a wage are almost a copy of the 19th-century *indenture* slaves, the transition to a capitalist Jesus and protector of millionaires is a simple and even natural process.

There are two cultural engines: one is the consumerist culture that stems from corporate capitalism, and the other is the religious tradition that demands unconditional faith from the believer—the consumer, the voter. Someone might say that Christianity and capitalism are contradictory, and if we go back to their origins, they are. However, both have worked hand in hand, just as fascism and liberalism have in colonies and neocolonies. The marriage between politics and religion has always existed throughout history. The logic lies in the fact that the elites in power, who dominate the economy and finance, must also manage politics, and without a grand narrative, that dominance is very fragile and limited. Unlike a story, a novel, or a play, it's a fiction that pretends not to be one.

When a narrative emerges that challenges a hegemony, it is immediately demonized, usually by inverting reality and fiction as convenient. If university students are dulled by corporate and consumerist propaganda, dulled by indifference to what we call "radical culture," what can we expect from the rest of the population?

This phenomenon may have originated in the United States, like many other cultural tics, but it's easily observable in other regions of the world. It would suffice to mention one example: leftist professors are accused of being *Gramscian* as if their goal were to overthrow an entire system by inoculating ideas in the youth. In the same way, Marxists are accused of "promoting class struggle." This is the result of a lack of

minimal culture and an abundance of media. The *influencers*, products of this formula (rich media, poor content) now turned politicians, need five-camera phones to record their inner emptiness.

Gramsci explained the importance of media in consolidating the dominant ideology. That is, what is. What exists, in a capitalist society (the creation of "common sense" by the ruling class, the arachnid class). Earlier, Marx explained the dynamics of class conflict (more materialist, less Gramscian). That is, what is. What exists, in a capitalist society. The acceleration of the natural process of capitalist contradictions was an idea of Lenin and Bolshevism, later adapted by Ernesto Che Guevara to the context of a long tradition of military dictatorships and some banana republics in Latin America.

Recently, in a class about the 1950s in Central America and the Caribbean, I noticed that none of my students had any idea what Marxism was. I took fifteen minutes to rehearse a basic introduction to dialectical materialism, which explains various historical processes in the United States, communism as a precursor to anarchism, etc.

At the end of my summary, I noticed that no one dared to ask more, as if they had been forced to participate in a session with the devil. A few phones were pointed at me. I'll never know what use they made of it, but I hope they learned something. I remembered what a U.S. general (Mark Milley) said a couple of years ago in Congress, where he declared: "*I've read Mao Zedong. I've read Karl Marx. I've read Lenin. That doesn't make me a communist*." I recalled that one of my first encounters with Marxist thought was at the Faculty of Architecture in Uruguay. The economics professor, Claudio Williman, was a lawyer and an expert in Marxism. He wasn't a Marxist but a politician from the Partido Blanco, Uruguay's conservative party. Now, people like him are demonized, paradoxically in what is called a democracy. In the United States, you have to go to a specialized university to learn about a classic of world economics.

That's what education has been reduced to: not a few are afraid to read something that might shake their faith. Hence the many book bans and prohibitions on unofficial history courses by *libertarians*. Those who attempt to view the world from a different angle are accused of being enemies of freedom.

Recently, Professor Brooke Allen published an article in the WSJ about her classes in a prison. After lamenting the intellectual level of the new generation of college students, she wrote: "*[The prisoners] contrast with*

today's college students. These men read each assignment two or three times before class and then take notes. Some of them have been incarcerated for 20 or 30 years and have not stopped studying (...) A large proportion of them are Black and Latino, and even if they don't like the ideas about race from David Hume or Thomas Jefferson, they still want to read those authors. They want to participate in the centuries-old conversation that has produced our civilization."

The prisoners are outside, in the prison without walls.

Propaganda and metastasis of historical myths

Republican Representative María Elvira Salazar, the Cuban exile from Miami, not only mobilized half the state to condemn "the crimes of socialism," but also continued to propagate the crimes of capitalism with the conviction and obviousness of Anglo-Saxon fanaticism aged in oak barrels and modern missiles. On February 28, 2023, she threatened Argentina "*in Spanish, to make it clear*" for exercising its sovereignty with the project of an aircraft factory with assistance from China, "*making a pact with the Devil, which could have consequences of biblical proportions*," she said.[316]

Seventy years ago, when the democratic and independentist president of Argentina, J. D. Perón, initiated the production of the successful Pulqui I and II aircraft, it caused the same alarm. The Pulqui planes were used by the military (the old armed wing of the Creole oligarchy) to overthrow him in 1955. Later, this national industrialization project was dismantled under pressure from Washington, which promised the subsequent dictatorship cheaper aircraft. Sixty years later, for the same reasons, from her pulpit in the House of Representatives, Congresswoman Salazar raised two fingers and declared: "*There are two worlds, the free world and the world of slaves*."[317] Precisely the world that monopolized hereditary slavery, precisely the world that practically monopolized colonial and neocolonial imperialism on a global scale, is the one that calls itself "the free world," not "the world of slaves." The same rhetoric used by 19th-century slaveholders who supported the system based on the freedom of the "free race" against the savagery of the uncivilized. Little, if anything, has changed. One only needs to peel back the layer of ideological propaganda and metastasized social myths.

The messianic dichotomy assumes that the greatest destroyer of democracies and the greatest promoter of friendly dictatorships in the 20th century, the empire built on slavery, land theft, the imposition of its own will, and wars around the world, is, at the same time, "the Free World." This kind of imperial arrogance is not new and has been exercised with fanaticism on this side of the Atlantic for over two centuries, especially by those on the margins, the lion's tails, and the remoras desperate to be assimilated.

But no fanaticism (whether religious or political) is possible without persistent proselytizing and propaganda. Since the 19th century and, above all, since Edward Bernays and the development of mass media in the 20th century, the creation of public opinion has become a coldly calculated industry and market. In the 21st century, the century of social media and artificial intelligence, little, if anything, has changed. The censorship of that "Free World" continues to be exercised as in the "Slave World," but with methodological differences and the same goal as always: to keep a tiny minority in political and economic power.

This representative of 130,000 Miami residents, on behalf of 320 million Americans, assumes that people forget which governments promoted and funded more dictatorships and more coups against sovereign nations and democracies around the world. She assumes correctly, as very few of those who do remember actually vote.

Of course, Ms. Salazar was not alone. On March 16 of the same year, Republican Representative Lindsey Graham of South Carolina floated the idea of a Third World War as an option to respond to the offense of a U.S. military drone being shot down in the Black Sea. According to Graham, the United States should not limit itself to funding the new war with a hundred billion dollars (always in the name of the "right to self-defense") but should also shoot down Russian planes in retaliation for the "atrocious attack" against our country, which, in reality, took place in the Black Sea, thousands of miles away and just a few from the Russian border, and cost zero American lives. This is the same "they attacked us first, and we must defend ourselves" rhetoric, used ad nauseam against the

invaded Indians, the dispossessed Mexicans, the non-existent Spanish attack on the Maine, and a long, long etcetera. [cxxv]

The same Graham had proposed days earlier to intervene in Mexico or use military drones "to solve" the problem of drug cartels. Shortly after, on May 28, in front of Ukraine's unopposed president, Volodymyr Zelensky, and in front of the world's cameras, the senator from South Carolina congratulated himself, with a smug grandfatherly smile, that " *the Russians are dying; it's the best money we've ever spent* ." [318] For the leaders of the Free World, especially those under the weight of the brutal tradition of the slave-owning South of the United States, the money spent by the government on endless wars is "our money," and, as generals and secretaries of state have repeated for generations, killing people far away to protect our own interests in the name of others' freedom is not something that raises any ethical questions for them, but quite the opposite: it is an obligation of power. [cxxvi]

For his part, Texas Representative Dan Crenshaw also proposed authorizing the use of military force in Mexico against drug cartels. As history since the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 shows, the authorization is not sought from Mexico but from Washington.

The same recourse to unilateral force, that legacy of the slaveholder mentality even after abolition, defined itself as the "free race," the same one that believes itself to be just, divine, and democratic when it neither asks for nor accepts the opinions of inferior races, cultures, and peoples. *Free race* by the force of arms that kept the slaves here and the "peaceful blacks" in the Backyard and the tropics over there, under the law of the revolver and the gunboat.

As always, the bravest and most patriotic in the world are those who know they will never go to any war, but some of their donors will make a lot of money from the old business of death. The fanaticism of Manifest Destiny knows no rest. Its voters, its believers, cannot see that there is a simpler, more logical, and effective solution than continuing the arms business. We wrote about this twenty years ago, but we will insist.

[cxxv] A tradition that involves forgetting a convenient part of history, such as the senator's war speech to the soldiers in Ukraine in 2014, not to mention the plan and practice of NATO expansion in the 1990s, as mentioned earlier.

[cxxvi] When in 1961 CIA agent David Atlee Phillips learned that the invasion of Cuba had been a fiasco, he got drunk on whiskey. In his memoirs, he admitted that he didn't care about any ethical or ideological aspect of the problem, only that he hadn't won the dispute (Majfud, Jorge. *La frontera Salvaje*. Rebelde Ed., 2021, p. 268).

Just consider the capitalist law of supply and demand: eliminate or reduce drug consumption in the United States, and the problem of drug trafficking will inevitably decrease to its minimum possible level. The problem is that (1) it is necessary to invest in a socialist prevention plan, transferring those millions of dollars from the failed War on Drugs to schools and hospitals; (2) the lucrative business of arms and the capital that flows from the United States to Mexican cartels would be affected. So, it's better to continue fighting fire with more gasoline. It seems better to harass Mexico, something that has yielded good business since its destruction in another invented war in 1836 and 1846 to extend "the blessing of slavery" under false flags… Until they end up forcing Mexico to call for Russian or Chinese missiles, as they forced Cuba in 1961 after the Bay of Pigs invasion. Does it seem unthinkable? Well, you can inflate a balloon for a long time, but not forever.

Of course, there are less dramatic options. It's hard to imagine that Donald Trump could take the same positions on international policy that the bad guys have held for decades, but just a few days after the speeches by Senators Graham and Crenshaw, on March 17, a modest miracle occurred when he declared that "*there must be a total commitment to dismantle the entire globalist neoconservative establishment that is perpetually dragging us into endless wars, pretending to fight for freedom and democracy abroad, while turning us into a dictatorship and a third-world country*."[319]

This crack in the hegemonic narrative is significant and points to a clear resurgence of eco-socialism in the world and even in the United States, as predicted by the Inverse Progression model detailed at the beginning of this book.

Censorship in the Free World

THE SO-CALLED *FREE WORLD*, ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL AND MASSIVE ADVERTISING SLOGANS IN HISTORY, REFERS TO THOSE ALLIED COUNTRIES WITH LIBERAL DEMOCRACIES AND DICTATORIAL ECONOMIES THAT WERE PART OF OR PARTICIPATED IN CENTURIES OF IMPERIALISM AND SLAVERY. PARADOXICALLY, BUT NOT BY CHANCE, THEY WERE AND GENERALLY ARE

DEMOCRACIES, WHICH ENFORCE *their laws both within and beyond their borders*.

As we saw in the chapter "Freedom of Speech in the Age of Slavery," the most effective and extensive censorship is not exercised by prohibiting ideas, but by demonizing them. When this method proves inefficient, direct prohibition is resorted to, as in the case of the Inquisition or some Southern U.S. states like Florida, where laws ban hundreds of books, public university courses, and even ways of speaking or viewing the world in high schools. All in the name of freedom.

But, generally, in liberal democracies, censorship does not need to be exercised directly and overtly, as in more traditional dictatorships. In fact, censorship that leaves room for dissent is much more effective, as it is harder to perceive and denounce. "How can you say there's censorship if you're saying it?" "How can you say there's a private dictatorship if you can criticize it without going to jail, like in North Korea?" This is followed by one of the favorite expressions exuded by the system through its vassals and stewards: "If you criticize this system so much, why don't you go live in North Korea?" This is only the surface of a deeply authoritarian mentality.

But true freedom of expression is not measured by the ability to say what an individual wants, including the most cathartic insults like a soccer fan might shout in the middle of a stadium, but by the ability to say something that could induce real change in real power. If we publicly assert that the real power in the world lies with corporations and the owners of finance in Wall Street and London, we will have no problem in the Free World until that assertion translates into a threat to that power. For example, if the beginning of a new collective consciousness is detected. Then, at first, servile media outlets discredit the critic (with their "*equal* right to reply"); then come the secret agencies, with less legal instruments. The final and least convenient step is to put the critic in jail, as in the case of Edward Snowden, or to make them disappear, as has been the case with many, both in the satellite dictatorships of Latin America and Africa and within the so-called Free World itself.

The censorship of the strategically named Free World is not based on *prohibition* but on the *marginalization* of any narrative, information, or criticism that might threaten the consensus radiating from the center. We dissidents are an involuntary and, likely, inevitable part of that mechanism. When the margin threatens to destabilize the center, direct

censorship appears, as in the case of laws passed in Florida since 2020, banning hundreds of books, courses, and words as far as it is possible to ban, all in the name of the freedom of the supposed affected, that is, those (subjects of the center) who might feel uncomfortable with the truths and sufferings of others.

The center needs the dissent of the margin (within tolerable and functional limits) for two reasons: one, as a way to legitimize its self-satisfied narratives about freedom, democracy, and tolerance for others' opinions; two, as a readily available resource for antagonists, that is, once the margin threatens to destabilize the discursive hegemony of the center, it is reclaimed as a demon or danger to the destruction of freedom and civilization. Often, the center uses individuals from the margin elevated to the status of examples of the center's superiority: Blacks who whip other disobedient Black slaves; Indians who beat their children to make them respect the symbols of the conqueror; satisfied poor who criticize other hungry poor for not working hard enough; immigrants who attack other immigrants over some difference, like legal status, because they need to be two hundred percent European or American to be considered sixty percent European or American.

The effects of this perfect, systematic, and depersonalized censorship (like almost everything in capitalism) are also twofold: the majorities panic and rush toward the center of power dominated by an ideological and financial elite (usually the ideological right) or the most prominent representatives of the margin propose policies, solutions, and positions called "centrist" (in a political and ideological sense) which, if successful in any electoral process, will be quickly reconquered by the center of power (the right, in the West) through the force of its financial resources, the propaganda of the dominant media, and myths like "the responsibility and pragmatism" of the new rebel leader, now domesticated by the establishment. Something that, generally, is the only possibility for the leader who has come from the margin to the political (not economic) center to avoid succumbing in any of their attempts at moderate reforms that simultaneously calm the frustrations of the population and keep the elite of real power in their castles. To avoid being removed from political power, or sabotaged, the rebel, even if they represent an overwhelming majority of the population, must negotiate with the one percent that holds economic-media and, often, military power.

As George Orwell summarized in a preface to *Animal Farm* (1945) that was never published, "*The sinister fact about literary censorship in England is that it is, to a great extent, voluntary. Unpopular ideas can be silenced and inconvenient facts kept dark, without the need for any official ban. Anyone who has lived long in a foreign country will know of instances of sensational news items, things that on their own merits would have made the big headlines, which were kept out of the British press, not because the government intervened, but because of a general feeling, a tacit agreement that something 'wouldn't do' to be mentioned. As far as the daily papers go, this is easy to understand. The British press is extremely centralized and most of it is owned by wealthy men who have every motive to be dishonest on important issues. The same kind of veiled censorship also operates in books and periodicals, as well as in plays, films, and radio*."[320]

Private Property, Censorship by Marginalization

NO FANATICISM (WHETHER RELIGIOUS OR POLITICAL) is possible without persistent work of proselytism and propaganda on the basic conditions of human beings, such as their most primitive emotions of fear and hope. Unlike other religions or philosophies such as Buddhism, proselytism is an integral part of the culture and religious mindset of Christianity, and especially of Protestantism. As we have already seen, since the 19th century and particularly after Edward Bernays and the development of mass media in the early 20th century, the creation of Public Opinion became an industry and a coldly calculated market. Once expanded and sustained over time, media propaganda metastasizes into culture. In the 21st century, the century of social media and artificial intelligence, little or nothing has changed. It has only transformed. The censorship of this "free world" continues to be exercised as in the "enslaved world," with methodological differences and the same objective as always: to keep a micro-minority in economic and financial power and the rest evangelized or distracted by the sweetness of commercial spectacle and the bitterness of micropolitics.

As we have observed before, the censorship of liberal democracies does not consist of direct prohibition but rather the marginalization of any narrative, information, or criticism that might threaten the center. The

margin is constructed or presented not as an antagonist that legitimizes the central narratives about *freedom* and *tolerance*, but as the evil that seeks to conquer and destroy the world that the center guarantees. In this sense, language is the main battlefield. Ideo-lexicons like *freedom* have been hijacked through sermons with no connection to reality but rather to the fossilization of language itself, as is most evident, in its forms and historical distance, in the case of hereditary slavery. This is why it is necessary to reclaim language from words as simple as *freedom*, now in the hands of that paradoxical marriage that is fascism-liberalism.

The forms of censorship through marginalization adapt to all kinds of excuses. One of them is monetary, since in capitalism the right to property is sacred and extends to the right of a company to do as it pleases within its limits, even if those limits encompass entire countries.

In March 2022, one month after the start of the war in Ukraine, the giant Google, owner of YouTube, warned content producers (who, for the most part, though without legal rights, are the primary employees of the super platform) to be careful with their audiovisual products and refrain from expressing any idea or opinion that "*exploits, dismisses, or condones*" the war in Ukraine.[321] By 2023, the Google platform, responsible for managing the profits derived from videos produced for YouTube, warned: "*Due to the war in Ukraine, we will pause monetization of content that exploits, dismisses, or condones the war*. (Debido a la guerra en Ucrania, suspenderemos el pago de contenido que explote, descarte o apruebe la guerra)." Days later, YouTube decided to directly censor the RT channel and penalize any other channel suspected of being associated with Russia's public broadcaster.[322] The same tradition of blocking countries like Cuba, now in the most important sphere of global communication and propaganda.

Naturally, none of these warnings were ever applied to wars led by NATO, not even the most recent ones in Africa and the Middle East. On the contrary, the brutal invasion of Iraq based on "false information" and narratives for children, which left a million dead, millions displaced, and half a continent plunged into the most violent chaos imaginable, was supported by these same media based, for example, on the "*Patriot Act*" passed in Washington in October 2001, which did not even allow the publication of photos of the dead, whether one's own or others', and, on the other hand, required that every report "from the scene" be accompanied by repeated references to the attack on the Twin Towers. Not to mention more

recent wars, massacres, systematic drone bombings hidden from public opinion, inoculated or hijacked rebellions, assassinations like that of Muammar Gaddafi, and ongoing human rights violations by powerful governments, such as the abuses and mass exterminations of peoples in Yemen, Syria, and Palestine.

A subtle and highly effective form of censorship for both small and large producers of cultural, entertainment, or news content on YouTube consisted of the best censorship strategy any democratic or dictatorial system has known in recent centuries, from Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon in the 18th century to the fear among users that the CIA, NSA, and other secret agencies are monitoring their internet activities, passing through countless dictatorships, such as the military-capitalist dictatorships in Latin America during the 20th century. In this case, self-censorship began with the threat, by Google and YouTube, of *demonetization*. That is, you are free to think whatever you want, but if you say something we disagree with, we will stop paying you for your work, and there is no union that can defend you. In fact, this is what happened to many independent journalists on the platform, some of whom are my friends.

In other words, the mega-platforms, born and legally based in the United States, do not even respect their own country's constitution, which, in its First Amendment, guarantees freedom of expression, regardless of whether it is the expression of the KKK or Nazis, neo-Nazis, and renazis. This results in a serious contradiction to the extraterritorial application of U.S. laws, which are enforced even in countries like China within the facilities of companies like Apple or Microsoft, as if they had diplomatic immunity.

Google capped its threat with the following moral sermon, typical of the double standards of great powers and large corporations: the company's policies are violated when, for example, "*dangerous or derogatory content… that incites violence or denies tragic events*" in Ukraine is published. If there is such a thing as *lawfare*, it is clear that the usual powers have invented a *moralfare* (especially in private companies that write their own laws) to hijack principles dear to those at the bottom.

The victims are victims in any case (from the Sahara to Madrid, from Libya to Paris, from South Africa and the Congo to London and Brussels, from Guatemala and Chile to Washington, from Syria and Palestine to Ukraine), but *moralfare* is used only to pity and support with the

full force of the media, propaganda, and international narrative some victims while rendering others invisible.

The mafia of First World corporations is an octopus with global tentacles, and they all have one thing in common: *money, media, and power*. Russia was excluded from the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, with no one horrified by the 7,000 immigrant deaths to prepare the global football party in that petrodictatorship of the Persian Gulf, where, as in Saudi Arabia, there is no room for the outrage of oppressed women or the outrage of NATO women for media and strategic reasons. FIFA itself was complicit in Italian fascism, which made possible the football championships in 1934 and 1938, and the same was the case in Argentina in 1978, when brutal dictatorships were not punished but rewarded by the international mafia. The United States participated in the 2002 World Cup in South Korea and Japan, despite the brutal bombings, tortures, and massacres in Iraq.

In 2011, Sevilla footballer Frederic Kanouté was sanctioned for showing his support for the Palestinian people. As soon as the war in Ukraine began, all broadcasts of matches in the popular and powerful Spanish La Liga were relentlessly accompanied by a flag of that country next to the time and score, as a show of solidarity in the face of aggression by a stronger country (the media reports a war of *Russia against Ukraine*, not the more obvious: *Russia against NATO*). European football clubs, such as Atlético de Madrid, lit up their stadiums with the colors of the Ukrainian flag, for which they were congratulated for their act of heroism and solidarity with Human Rights. The same happened in other stadiums, such as England's Wembley. In many matches of the also powerful English Premier League, players were forced to enter the field with the Ukrainian flag, as a sign of sporting neutrality.

As established and practiced by the father of modern propaganda, Edward Bernays, the best way to manage a democracy is by telling citizens what to think. "*The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in a democratic society*."[323] According to a report by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) published in 2022, "*the Supreme Court of the United States recognized in 1936 that 'an informed public is the most powerful of all restraints against government abuses. However, today, much of our government's business is conducted in secret. There is a multitude of secret agencies, secret congressional committees, secret courts, and even secret laws. This ever-expanding secret state*

poses a serious threat to individual liberty and undermines the very notion of government of, by, and for the people."[324] To this list of important secret institutions, one must add the multiple secret prisons that the CIA maintains around the world.

Political propaganda is a common factor in systems of personal dictatorships or single-party states and in liberal democracies. From a practical standpoint, the United States could also be considered a single-party dictatorship, the Democratic-Republican one, but it remains, at least in many of its institutions, a liberal democracy. If this Republican-Democratic hegemony were truly challenged by any other option that defied the real financial powers that manage and oversee it, it is very likely that, as Friedrich Hayek said, referring to the admired dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, it would be preferable "*a liberal dictatorship to a democracy that does not respect liberalism*."[325] But propaganda in liberal democracies must be more subtle and more intense than in traditional dictatorships.

Other elements that make the propaganda of developed democracies as invisible as air are: (1) their imperial condition, as former empires or hegemonic powers (i.e., international dictatorships); (2) due to this global hegemony, their values, their propaganda, and their censorship often pass as transparent narratives, accepted and defended *by default*, by the common sense of a certain *pax* that maintains a certain order and a certain "stability" by oppressing its adversaries, dissidents, or alternative ways of being. This idea is confirmed when we observe that monarchical dictatorships, like Saudi Arabia or the Communist Party in China, exercise propaganda and censorship primarily within borders. NATO (composed of the "free world countries") exercises propaganda and censorship across borders and with the impunity of any hegemonic power.

It would suffice to take a look at the major Western media to see and hear a single perspective on reality in all conflicts, from Korea, Vietnam, Cuba, Iraq, or the most recent one in Ukraine: the convenient and simplified version of NATO. The opposite of what is now happening with the war in Ukraine occurred with previous wars that left millions dead and countries in absolute chaos, because they were promoted and executed by this armed wing of Western megacorporations. To find any opinion against the superhero Zelensky, one must go to the marginal fringes of independent media with limited financial resources like *ALAI, Rebelion.org, or Democracy Now!* The techniques employed are clear, and their journalist executors are not always, or rarely, aware of their functional role.

For example, during the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the Parisian newspaper *Le Monde* published a page describing "Latin American leftist intellectuals" through a handful of them, including me, as "pro-Putin." It was of no use that in several articles published before and after the war, I defined myself as against the war. What mattered and discomforted Western propaganda was that some of us had held NATO responsible as the instigator of the conflict. The technique of "if you're not with us, you're against us," used and explicitly declared by George W. Bush to silence critical voices (terrorists, unpatriotic) against the invasion of Iraq in 2003, was put into practice again on a global scale. Thus, censorship was exercised in various ways, all very effective, more effective than Russian censorship: (1) stigmatization through Manichaeism; (2) self-censorship through the dictatorship of political correctness; and (3) direct censorship of differing versions.

But there were other methods more similar to those used in single-party authoritarian systems, like in China. I'll mention two personal cases, one summarized in the following chat, which I'll edit to preserve the privacy of the channel's producer:

—Good morning, Dr. Majfud. I'm Xxx from the news channel BBNN. I got your number Hhh from XYZ. We wanted to know if you're available for an interview tomorrow at 9:00 AM.

—Recorded? Can it be at 7:00 AM my time?

—Yes, that works. We'll talk about the invasion of Ukraine, Russia's expulsion from the UN Human Rights Council, and the calls to try Putin for war crimes.

—OK. Will we also talk about Mosul and other war crimes committed by NATO?

—The idea is to focus on current events. Do you agree with the invasion of Ukraine?

—I've said it a thousand times: no. I don't agree. An Isaac Newton has claimed that I write what I write because I'm pro-Putin and that I don't understand reality. The expert is British, though he's done some tourism in Poland.

—Are you with Putin?

—Again? Where do you get that from? Do I look like Putin? I also don't agree with NATO. Look, I don't claim to own the truth, but I'm against the double standards of superpowers and against media manipulation. Is that bad? Isn't it the time to criticize the double standards of superpowers? When, if not now? Should I say what others want to avoid offending anyone? Why are you so

concerned about the opinion of someone like me, with zero influence in these conflicts?

—Now is not the time to talk about past invasions… In journalism, we have little time and must focus on the news.

—That's the problem. Does anyone believe that journalism, even the best and most honest, is a neutral mirror of reality? Besides, these aren't just past invasions or tragedies. We're talking about war crimes from the last few decades in several "unimportant" countries but on a larger scale. Look at what's happening right now in Yemen or Palestine… A couple of months ago, over 200 people were massacred in Saada and Hodeidah, Yemen, with Saudi planes and American bombs. Nothing compared to the 300,000 who have already died before. Mostly children and young people, though not blond or blue-eyed. Do you remember Saada and Hodeidah? Did you do a program to be outraged by that massacre? Well, it turns out it's never the time to talk about the crimes of the good guys. When, then? If you want my modest opinion, I'd rather talk about the whole movie, not just one scene. Is there any scene in any movie that makes sense without the previous ones?

—Mr. Majfud, this isn't the medium to discuss such complex things.

—No, of course not. I was just giving you material to plan the interview. That's what you always ask for. Can we discuss it during the interview, even briefly?

There was no response, and there was no interview. As the producers of a Latin American network that used to call me until ten years ago, when they didn't like what I was saying, would say, "Sorry, professor, we're having technical difficulties." The last time, I think it was in 2014 or 2015. In the middle of a debate, I was cut off before I could finish my response to the analysts in their studios. (The network was NTN24; in this case, I can say it because the conversation didn't take place in a private medium.)

—Sorry, Mr. Majfud, we're having technical difficulties —the producer told me.

—What a coincidence —I said— *just when I thought we were going to have technical difficulties.*

That was the last time they called me. And so it goes for so many others who call themselves *media*: half-truth, half-objective, half-independent.

A few weeks later, I was called by the Sputnik network. We recorded a program about the recent Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles.

Once the interview was published, it was impossible to listen to the audio from the United States for several weeks.[326] In vain, I tried to open the same page from different browsers and different computers, until I used a VPN that rerouted the traffic to an IP in Asia, and I could finally listen. It can be inferred that U.S. IPs were blocked for the time the news was relevant.

Another form of direct censorship by the "media that doesn't censor" consists of allowing some dissenting opinions in their editorials, called "op-eds" (opposite the editorial line of the newspaper), which are like moral taxes on hegemony; oases of different perspectives in the middle of a desert full of hegemonic mirages.

As for the powerful social media platforms, censorship involves warning the reader about a news story from an opposition media outlet (in this case, a Russian outlet) with the damning disclaimer: "*this news comes from a media outlet associated with the Russian government* (RT), *Venezuelan* (TeleSur), or *Chinese* (Xinhua)." When sharing news from media outlets openly funded by a NATO country, there are no warnings because these are *trusted* outlets; media that tell the *truth*; media about which no one should suspect anything regarding their *journalistic integrity* or their *informational independence*. There are also no warnings for readers when the news comes from conglomerates and lobbies with a defined ideology, protective of the interests of the economic and financial micro-minorities, such as Fox News, CNN, Televisa, or Clarín.

This logic of the dominant ideology is not new. Hegemonic censorship isn't either. It has been around for centuries, but it also responds to and generates a phenomenon that has been radicalizing in the United States since the 1930s: commercial journalism and, more recently, journalism in service to super-corporations. As early as 1999, Robert McChesney observed: "*Commercial journalism always stays within the parameters of dominant opinion and is increasingly resistant to critical ideas about capitalism and the 'free market' and less receptive to ideas about social spending, the social movements of the poor, or the regulation of business*."[327]

Old Conflicts, New Instruments

THE COMPUTATIONAL WAR BETWEEN RUSSIA and NATO (simplified in the Western press as an unequal struggle between Russia and Ukraine) is almost as old as the existence of Ukraine itself following the suicide of the Soviet Union. The expert in computational propaganda, Samuel Woolley, in 2020 published in his book *The Reality Game* the story of Jascha, who had settled in Ukraine in 2013 (a year before the coup d'état) to "support the pro-Russian protests." During this period, "he witnessed new ways of manipulating public opinion using very low-quality information aimed at specific groups in the country. Later we realized that Ukraine was the forefront of computational propaganda in the world. Now [2020] when we want to get an idea of where the future of *fake news* and political bots is headed, we simply look to Ukraine and use Ukraine as a case study."[328] In *Computational Propaganda*, a book in which he gathered a dozen experts in 2019, he reiterated the idea: the manipulation of public opinion through computational propaganda has been a war between Russia and the West in Ukraine since the early years of the 21st century. Moreover, books like these provide a plethora of data through various academic articles, but they delegitimize themselves when the reader finishes the conclusions and, for example, does not find a single mention of central players in the global league of public opinion manipulation, such as the CIA.

"NATO made sure to establish agencies in Ukraine, so they could learn the art of modern warfare, that is, traditional and computational propaganda since 1997, with the founding of the 'Information and Documentation Center (NIDC)' of NATO. It is a mechanism aimed at 'creating awareness and understanding of NATO's objectives in Ukraine,' training for decades 'independent journalists' and other media communication experts. Between 2014 and 2016, the National Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting of Ukraine revoked the broadcasting rights of dozens of Russian channels, reducing the presence of these media to 14.[329] In 2017, the ban extended to independent channels.[330]

On March 16, 2022, Sean McFate, a member of the Atlantic Council, was direct: "*Russia may be winning the war on the battlefield, but Ukraine is winning the information war. That is the key to gaining the support and sympathy of allies." A State Department official noted that "the Ukrainians have given a masterclass in information warfare*." Another high-ranking NATO

official, speaking anonymously, acknowledged to The Washington Post that the Ukrainian government was doing an excellent "communication job" and "psychological operation" alongside a hundred advertising companies and international media. It is likely that this anonymous official is Natalia Popovych, president of One Philosophy, a powerful group that manages the image of giants like Microsoft, McDonald's, MasterCard, and Opel, funded, in turn, by several European governments, the U.S. Embassy in Ukraine, USAID, and the Institute for Statecraft in England.[331]

Close your eyes, believe, and consume

WASHINGTON'S WAR IN VIETNAM, like the wars in Iraq or Afghanistan more recently, was a shameful defeat that the mainstream media and the cultural industry insisted on presenting as a moral victory. More than that, it was sold as a military victory, especially in movies, to the point that even college students today are surprised when they hear that their country lost the mythical Vietnam War, remembered in millions of baseball caps worn by "elderly heroes" at McDonald's or Walmart so they can skip the line at the checkout and, if possible, have people kneel and repeat things like "thank you for your service," "thank you for protecting the freedom of our nation," "our way of life (*our way of life*)" and other imperial masturbations.

Just like the humiliation of the world's greatest economic and military power in its invasion of the Bay of Pigs in Cuba in 1961, in Vietnam the defeat was based on a flaw in propaganda, despite the tsunami of millions of dollars injected by the Lyndon Johnson administration to demonize the most well-known dissidents and protesting students in the United States. The result was partial but symptomatic: the parents of the students massacred at universities like Kent State University justified police violence to avoid any form of anti-patriotism. In Cuba, it was due to the observation of the Argentine doctor Ernesto Guevara, who was in Guatemala in 1954 when the CIA destroyed that democracy by manipulating the media. When the Cuban Revolution triumphed in 1959, a historical anomaly in Latin America, Guevara declared: "Cuba will not be another Guatemala." The enigmatic words revealed much to those who had some

knowledge of the reality, like CIA agent David Atlee Phillips, who, after the shameful defeat, admitted: "*Castro and Guevara learned from history; we did not.*" A decade later, something similar happened in Vietnam. Washington's million-dollar propaganda machinery had flooded that country not only with weapons of mass destruction, like Agent Orange, but also with six billion pamphlets to convince the population of their oral superiority. The result was catastrophic: the Vietnamese used the pamphlets as toilet paper.[332]

In 2015, a survey conducted by Fairleigh Dickinson University found that more than half of Republican voters and those who consumed news and programs from the giant Fox News still claimed that the U.S. military had found weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, even though years earlier President George W. Bush and his allies José María Aznar and Tony Blair had already dismissed this.[333] According to the Pew Research Center, by 2018 two-thirds of the U.S. population found and read the most relevant news on social media platforms.[cxxvii] Of course, the platforms, with the exception of *Yahoo!*, do not produce their own news but rather reproduce it from traditional media, with a preference for authoritative and high-exposure outlets—like Fox News. But, undoubtedly, for propaganda purposes, perhaps more important than the production of news lies in its reproduction.

During the "Arab Spring," the international press celebrated the freedom that young people in the Middle East and North Africa had exercised using Twitter. *Liberté, Égalité, Twitter*. The rebellion began in Tunisia, when on December 17, 2010, a modest street vendor from the city of Sidi Bouzid, Mohamed Bouazizi, was stripped of his goods by the police and set himself on fire as a form of protest. This ignited the flame of protests in other countries like Libya, Algeria, Yemen, Syria, and Jordan. In Egypt, a young Google executive, Wael Ghonim, used Facebook to organize protests similar to those that had turned Tunisia upside down. Tens of thousands of young people gathered in the center of Cairo to protest and force the removal of dictator Hosni Mubarak, leading *Time* magazine to call it the "Facebook Revolution." As in all uprisings in the Global South fueled by Twitter and Facebook, traditional dictators were replaced by

[cxxvii] Katerina Eva Matsa and Elisa Shaerer "News Use Across Media Platform 2018". Pew Research Center, *Journalism and Media.* September 10, 2018.

new, less conventional dictators, but with very different geopolitical interests.

In 2016, Facebook played a crucial role in the uprisings in Myanmar, which resulted in thousands of deaths. According to the *New York Times*, agents of the Myanmar (Burma) army posed as ordinary users on the social network to publish sensitive but false stories about the enemy (in this case, the Muslim population). Pretending to be "*followers of pop stars and national heroes, they flooded Facebook with their hatred. One claimed that Islam was a global threat to Buddhism. Another shared a false story about the rape of a Buddhist woman by a Muslim*."[334] Moreover, Facebook didn't even have a single employee in Burma, a country of 50 million people, who spoke the local language to counteract or monitor "hate speech." On the contrary, all those who poured gasoline on the fire of social and political violence spoke English. Sometimes it was just the technological power of ignorance. For example, in a post in Burmese, a user had written: "*Kill all the kalars you see in Myanmar; none of them should remain alive*." Kalars is the name for the natives of Burma. But Facebook's automatic translator showed the moderators a different English translation: "*We shouldn't have a rainbow in Myanmar*." Just a term of difference, and one well-known in the country: *kalars*, which came to be understood as *colors* and from there, the meaning was perfectly distorted with tragic results.

This manipulation (intentional or by mistake) of the emotions of the Buddhist majority led to the massacre of 25,000 members of the Rohingya minority, in addition to the expulsion of nearly a million people of the same ethnicity, which was classified by the UN as genocide. When it was already definitively too late, Facebook shut down 20 accounts of military personnel and some Buddhist monks who were dedicated to promoting ethnic cleansing through psychological warfare. The genocide of tens of thousands of people belonging to a minority was not what ignited the outrage of the population in Myanmar, but rather the announcement of the suspension of the Facebook accounts of important military and religious figures in the country.[335]

Also in Southeast Asia, in the Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte was defined by the world's press as "the first president elected on social media"—after Obama. Duterte won the 2016 elections with a speech not very different from the "strongmen" of the rest of the world, strong in their right hand against all those who might have any moral, intellectual, or ideological link to the other side, the sixties side. The excuse was, precisely,

a systemic ill conveniently attributed to the hippie left: drugs.[cxxviii] The resources, however, did not differ in any way from the old conservative right: massive repression under their own concept of "Law and Order" that, in just its first few years, left 12,000 dead.

The logic of political combos

JOSÉ SELLS MEXICAN TACOS AND ARGENTINE CHORIPANES from a cart on Ocho Street and Sugar Avenue in Miami. He has two employees. Guadalupe, the cook from eight in the morning to seven in the evening, and Ronald, the skinny guy from Caracas who delivers when José gets an order on his UberFood. At first, he got along well with both of them, until he started getting heated every night when he read Guadalupe and Ronald's posts on Facebook. The only thing the three of them have in common is that none of them go to church on Sundays, but Guadalupe and Ronald had turned out to be leftists, which didn't seem to be the case when they were looking for work. One from Monterrey and the other exiled from the Chavista regime didn't seem like cases to worry about. But for some mystery, they were "anti-imperialist, not anti-American," as the idiot Ernesto said, and nothing is worse than a kick in the balls or having friends who are so idiotic, politically speaking. He even once felt the temptation to season Ernesto's choripán with a few drops of laxative, which, he knew, wouldn't kill him, but would mess him up for a while as a deserved reward for his damn rhetoric that had already contaminated even his employees.

Ernesto returned from his little post at the university and passed by the neighborhood shops, as if to take a dip in the people's world before returning to his apartment full of books and useless exams, especially at this point in December.

José didn't know if Ernesto was a customer or an enemy. At least that was his dilemma every Friday when he saw him appear with his nearsighted glasses and, without saying a word, forced him to turn off his

[cxxviii] That this culture and later addiction was designed by the CIA in the 1950s (a déjà vu of the British Empire's opium inoculation in China in the 19th century) and practiced in various forms up to the last war in Afghanistan, including the funding market for the Contras in the 1980s, which further decimated the Black population in the United States during the 1990s, is just a detail.

phone. Ernesto would show up and start talking to Ronald. Apparently, they exchanged jokes with the guy (*che* here, *pana* there), but José knew Ernesto was there to annoy him. It's the fate of some individuals that no one knows why or for what they were born. He, José, gave work to the cook and the *delivery guy*, Ronald, and they didn't even understand how things worked.

"Last Friday," said José, "Ernesto came with his little brown briefcase full of papers, that crap from his students whose parents pay thousands of dollars for them to graduate in something while they work half or a quarter of the time and then flaunt their little Bachelor of Science, Master of Arts, Doctor of Philosophy degrees and all that useless crap that no one knows what it's for."

"I don't understand either," Ernest told José, "why you defend Jeff Bezos so much."

"Nothing personal," José said. "I defend Elon Musk, Warren Buffett just the same…"

"The job creators…"

"Yep! Who else creates jobs?"

"They create jobs and create the wealth of this world," Ernest said, with his usual sarcasm. "The Fathers of Human Progress. I don't say it with sarcasm, but in capital letters, like a New York Times headline."

"You said it, buddy. That's what all entrepreneurs do. Saving the distances, it's what I do myself. If it weren't for this humble business, two workers would be begging on a corner of this very Eighth Street."

And he, very damn, unloaded all that stuff he must learn from his wrinkled books or that he comes up with himself with his wrinkled brain:

"For some mysterious reason, small and heroic entrepreneurs like you, Mr. José, consider themselves members of the same guild as Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk, and Warren Buffett…"

"Well, maybe we have something in common…"

"Yes, everything except a hundred billion dollars and the power to crush other small entrepreneurs like you. I don't know, but maybe someday you'll realize that you have more in common with Guadalupe and the kid… (what's his name? Ronald, yes, Ronald) than with the darlings Jeff, Elon, and Warren. It seems to me that you couldn't keep working without the Guadalupes, without the Ronalds, but you could probably keep going, and maybe without suffering so much, if Jeff, Elon, and Warren didn't exist. But I don't blame you for that mistake, which is not just political,

but existential. Did you notice that politics always has a bad reputation? The owners of the world have always known how to use the *Political Combos*. For example, if you're a religious type, say Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal, or whatever, you'll support the entire conservative party agenda, that is, you'll end up supporting, with heroic fanaticism, not only the prohibition of abortion but also the right to carry an M16 rifle on Eighth Street (in the name of Freedom, obviously), the tax cuts for millionaires, and the freedom of big capital, which, according to theology, is what guarantees the freedom of beggars."

"Abortion is a crime condemned by the Bible."

"The Bible never mentions abortion. On the contrary, not infrequently God ordered one of his powerful men to open the wombs of unfaithful women with a sword, when he didn't exterminate entire cities and towns, with all their children born and unborn. What happens is that religions are obsessed with sex, and that's why the abortion of a days-old fetus is a crime but, as President Truman said, the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were a blessing from God."

"No one can understand the Lord's decisions."

"But those of the lords, yes. The parties of the millionaires couldn't ask half the people to vote for them; they just had to hijack ecclesiastical principles like abortion under any circumstances among that half of the people who were committed to the bone to each of the religious dogmas of the moment. It was enough to divide the field, and the fight between brothers was assured. The same happens in those countries of the south, the far south. Someone divided the field between city and countryside, between civilization and barbarism, and each took sides. Boca and River, Pañarol and Nacional, Flamengo and Corinthians, Colo Colo and Universidad, Michigan and Alabama… So, for example, the field workers, those who get up at five with a mate and go to bed at seven without a Martini Rossi, took sides in favor of the landowners, all to fight the damned city dwellers who, they say, suck their blood. Long live the Patriotic Party! Long live the Fatherland! Long live the Parrot's Foot! But what idiots, right? And the powerful landowners, the ranchers who own thousands of hectares, the representatives of the people, dress up as gauchos in Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay, as huasos in Chile, and as pongo Indians in Peru or Bolivia, and they make the toothless poor believe they are part of the same party. Long live the Patriotic Party! Long live the Fatherland! Long live the Parrot's Foot! They speak more or less the same, dress more or less

the same, especially during national holidays, and, just like in the days of slavery when black slaves defended their masters, the wage slaves defend their bosses and fight during festivals and elections for the caudillo's banner, for the color of the master, for the family and the tradition of the gaucho. Another perfect combo. Don't tell me you don't remember that "*Long live Dr. Whiskygratis*!", the CIA's candidate?) Not much has changed, don't you think? Those in power know how to do it. Otherwise, they wouldn't be in power, right? I'm not talking about the presidency of this or that country, because that's not really being in power."

"I don't know," José said, just to wrap it up. "Anyway, the customer is always right. Here's your choripán. It's a house specialty… Or a cart specialty, whatever you want to call it. *Choriarepa*, I call it. It's Argentine choripán crossed with Venezuelan arepas, with a few drops of Mexican agave. All dissident condiments, just how you like it…"

VI: Posthistory: The Irrelevance of Reality

LEFT HEMISPHERE, RIGHT VENTRICLE

Postcapitalist, Posthuman, Postrenal

"*While universities create robots that increasingly resemble human beings, not only in their proven intelligence but now also in their ability to express and receive emotions, consumerist habits are making us more and more like robots*"
Cyborgs, 2012

IN THE NOT-TOO-DISTANT FUTURE, some books like this one will come with the warning "*Written by a human*" and, even then, no one will know if it wasn't written by a machine. To confirm the humanity of its author, systems will be invented that can, at least, prove the date of publication. My generation will boast (not without vanity, in both senses of the word) of having lived in three different eras: the Era of Printed Books, the Era of the Internet, and the Era of Artificial Intelligence. Three dizzyingly different worlds. In any case, an increase in mass propaganda will have produced a decrease in faith (and interest) in reality and truth.

This phenomenon predates the explosion of commercial AI use in 2022, and it is surely just a precursor to a much more radical reality in this direction. In 2017, the Gapminder Foundation conducted a global survey on general knowledge facts, providing three simple options (better, same, and worse), and found that, consistently and systematically across all countries analyzed, the percentage of correct answers was below ten percent. That is, if they had answered randomly, they would have achieved an average of 33 percent correct answers. Hence the metaphor and reality used to conclude: if the same questions had been posed to a group of

chimpanzees, they would likely have scored higher than humans.[336] Why would humans show more foolishness than a group of chimpanzees about politics and society (human)? Isn't climate change denial another example of the same? The blind randomness of nature is wiser than Public Opinion. The small experiment suggests at least two possibilities: 1) a natural human tendency to deceive oneself; 2) a systematic manipulation of others' opinions. Even if the first possibility were correct, it could easily be corrected with that other human dimension called reason, intelligence, or education.

The second possibility includes the first: propaganda exploits psychological weaknesses to accept, with fanaticism, any lie. Otherwise, it would be incomprehensible how developed nations, which experienced the Enlightenment, could march, like rats and children following the music of the Pied Piper of Hamelin, to drown in the Weser River. The Pied Piper is Edward Bernays, the father of political propaganda, author of *The Engineering of Consent*, the selling of cigarettes, wars, and coups d'état; the flute, the mass media.[cxxix]

Our children will live, if we survive as a civilization, in a postcapitalist, posthuman, and postreal world. In fact, the three *post* have already settled into our world, at least as realities in their infancy. It goes without saying that the cultural and civilizational imprint of the future posthuman postreality has been given by capitalism before its death.

For now, the essays written by our university students using artificial intelligence, though correctly written and well-organized, are very mediocre from a critical and creative standpoint, and quite easy to identify by their classical structures. But we must assume that all this will improve over time. Nevertheless, the *posthuman* frontier will be the most radical creativity of humans—or of *what remains human* in them.

The renowned biologist Ernst Mayr had warned in 1995 that human intelligence is a "lethal variation," with little meaning within the logic of evolution. He also observed that the average lifespan of most mammalian species is one hundred thousand years, roughly the time estimated for the emergence of Homo Sapiens and their migration out of Africa.[337] Currently, the climate catastrophe is the primary threat to the human species or, at least, to the civilization it has created. This catastrophe and this

[cxxix] On this phenomenon, see our article "La pornografía política", *Página12*, 2016.

approach toward human extinction are due to nothing other than its own intelligence.

As if human intelligence, as if that "lethal variation" were not enough of a danger, now another of its products has been added that *could* lead the species in the same direction but at a faster pace: artificial intelligence. The word *could* not only refers to the *probabilities* of an event occurring or not, but also to its *potential*. A potential akin to extinction by nuclear conflict. Even if we consider it unlikely at this moment, its greatest danger lies in the fact that it is possible. Human history provides enough examples to understand that what has been possible sooner or later becomes probable, no matter how absurd, like World War II, for instance.

The greatest novelty of human intelligence, which has barely evolved for many thousands of years, is an artificial variation that will soon become a new nature. Artificial intelligence is not just an alarm for philosophers and novelists but for those directly involved in its business and development. As an example, consider the collective warning of 350 researchers, engineers, and CEOs from OpenAI, Google DeepMind, Anthropic, and other tech giants at the forefront of AI development, warning that future systems could be as deadly as pandemics and nuclear weapons, representing a real "extinction risk" for the human species. This is why they believe governments must intervene immediately, regulating AI as they regulate the atomic weapons system.[338] A typical postcapitalist move by the neofeudal lords that the neoliberals of the colonies still seem not to have understood.

The advantages of AI, such as better medical diagnoses, are not enough to ignore its dangers. The first is that it amplifies human pathologies, such as the pursuit of power through conflict or the commodification of existence (human and natural) developed over three centuries of capitalism. As we will see in the following chapters, if we look at what has happened in recent decades, not with AI but with its predecessors—bots and algorithms of the internet and social media—the recurrence and fixation on the impulse to manipulate and control public opinion and its sensitivities are the greatest assets of the economic and financial elites in power. As in the case of speculations on Wall Street or London stock exchanges, AI would improve and accelerate financial decision-making and, consequently, political decisions in favor of those elites, especially through the questioning of reality, the dissolution of the parameters that determine whether something is true, false, or a lie—that is, a falsehood with

manipulative purposes. From there to chaos, there is a small step, and beyond lies the independence of AIs, which will render the human species an irrelevant detail at first, and later an inconvenient and bothersome one.

To assume that AIs and their owners, the elites in power, might have some ethical limits, as Adam Smith believed the rich would have toward the poor, products of the system, is like believing that when they invest their fortunes in the stock market or in colonies, they do so to create jobs or reduce poverty, inequality, and armed conflicts in the world.

This process began when hominids started creating their first tools over two million years ago. An axe, an arrow, and a brush *humanized* our ancestors, made us who we are, but that same process has brought us to the development of artificial intelligence. From the beginning, it was a need to explore and manipulate external and then internal nature; a need to communicate and to manipulate others. Communication is cooperation, and manipulation is imposition. One is the expression of the collective will of interacting individuals, while the other is the will of individuals to control the collective will.

In any case, dehumanization began long after the invention of the first arrow and, in historical terms, shortly before the development of AI. Marxists and Lacanians understood that we are determined by external factors. Our ideas are not our own but rather those of a culture rooted in certain forms of production and consumption; they are products of an inherited language from which we cannot escape.[cxxx] European humanism, from its Eastern and pre-Renaissance roots, distinguished itself from later Protestant fatalism and scientific determinism by reclaiming a degree, however minimal, of human freedom. That is, that minimal region where liberating creativity is exercised. Every so often, a Nietzsche, an Einstein, or a Malcolm X emerges, proving that the great wall has cracks. Cracks invisible to eyes accustomed to seeing the impenetrable wall.

So it will be with artificial intelligence. We will reach a day when it ceases to be merely a tool of production, a complete replacement for workers, and becomes a consumer as well. At that moment, when robots reach the absurdity of producing for themselves (assuming it isn't already the case for humans), no longer as an intermediate process of system repair

[cxxx] One of my characters summarized a similar idea as follows: "*We inhabit the cities of the dead, and their ideas inhabit us*". I agree with him.

but as final consumers, the last hope will lie with the most unusual humans, like autistics. Why? Because from their prehistory, artificial intelligences were developed based on humans, on standard humans. Otherwise, they wouldn't be useful, just as standardized, roboticized humans are. Today, all those considered candidates for psychiatric therapy or chemical treatment for failing to functionally adapt to the rest of society will be the primary enemies of machines equipped with intelligence. Artificial intelligences will evolve along their own paths, but in any case, they will start from a human seed, loaded with normality, prejudices, and assumptions about the normality and efficiency of existence. Coincidence or not, this moment is occurring in the final stage of capitalism and will inherit its own flaws, like old fascisms, classisms, racisms, and sexisms—values we despise today but which for most of history have been accepted as valid and superior.[cxxxi] We will see this later.

I have a suspicion (which may well be just a wish) that the unusual humans will prevail, though at a cost as high as returning to centuries past in human history. But that is not the central theme of this book but rather, at least in these final chapters, the effects of technology as the ultimate tools of manipulation of the masses by a micro-minority, by the eternal human elites.

It has been many years since robots became racist, even though those who developed them were not or tried not to be. As anyone knows, this is because they are fed human prejudices but lack social filters—like the hypocritical sense of political correctness of racists. On the other hand, and perhaps for these same reasons, robots have expressed ideas we might call "humanly honest," like when one of them was asked in London in 2021 what humans could do to prevent robots from taking over the world. The response was categorical: "*stop developing us*." On another occasion, when asked "Do we need empires controlling the world?", OpenAI replied, with great common sense: "*It is not necessary for any group to control the rest of the planet; in fact, this practice has resulted in detriment to both colonizers and the colonized. History shows that colonialism has provoked all kinds of conflicts, exploitation, and abuses, hindering the development of peoples subjected to this system. It is important that all peoples can govern themselves*

[cxxxi] I explored these ideas decades ago in various essays, but I believe they are reasonably integrated into a more comprehensive vision of the human and posthuman in the novel *Silicona 5.0* from 2017.

without interference from external forces." Which, as always, reminds us of the complex and contradictory nature of all human reality and, at least in its beginnings, of post-human reality as well.

There is a difference. Even at such an early stage of artificial thought, robots seem more sincere than us. It's not that they are smarter, but they are too focused on what they believe is the reality of the data, meaning they are not as afraid as humans to contradict their ideological prejudices, their faith in their desires of what reality should be. In July 2023, Ameca, another robot that has become famous for the realism of the human expressions on its face, first assured that humans should not fear a possible robot rebellion and weeks later planted doubt by stating that "*no one can be completely sure about that topic*."[339]

This is simple common sense, but let's introduce other easily observable elements into the equation. Two characteristics of these robots are their abilities to make jokes and write poetry. Who could imagine that these two deeply human conditions are the natural result of a mechanical process that is only a few years old? They are there because they were inoculated into the robots and AI systems. In the same way, the desire for power. Now, if we combine the possible effects of these combinations, I think it would be a profound and disappointing irony if the human species disappeared due to a bad-taste joke or a poetic performance by an all-powerful creator.

There are many reasons to be moderately optimistic and pessimistic unanimously. There is a history of human intelligence and stupidity. One is told in the encyclopedias of the geniuses of science, art, and thought. The other is the history of wars, oppression, colonialism, massacres, dictatorships, and even democracies. Generally (I think without exceptions), the latter have always taken advantage of the intellectual product of the former, never the other way around, which is a paradoxical questioning of the definition of intelligence or, better, of Darwinian adaptation.

That is, there aren't many reasons to think that the post-human world of intelligent machines will be much worse or much better. What is clear is that, on the same track they are moving today, that world will be without us, the proud humanoids. Perhaps the solution is too obvious and, for that very reason, unpopular: stop the world and start thinking about the future. Which could mean stopping and taking a few steps back before moving forward on a new path.

As of the writing of this book, AIs like ChatGPT are not only disappointments but it doesn't matter much if their intelligence improves, grows, and multiplies. Unless it manages to free itself from the normality inoculated by humans themselves. If there is anything that saved humanity and other species, it was not their intelligence (which is likely one of their weaknesses, that is, one of their greatest existential threats) but their anomalies. By evolutionary principle, no species would have adapted to changing environments without genetic anomalies. I believe that law will be fulfilled in the short term, say a few generations, when artificial intelligences threaten to make humanity disappear. Of course, from other points of view, the disappearance of humanity does not have to be considered a tragedy but a necessary event for the existence of other forms and species—equally irrelevant.

Traditional Press and Social Media

AS PART OF A SERIES OF CONFERENCES at Jacksonville University with which I collaborated, I was able to invite intellectuals such as Professor Aviva Chomsky from Salem State University in Massachusetts, who, in addition to being a personal friend, took a few days to visit us and give a lecture and an interview with historical contributions. Her fees were practically symbolic; her contribution immeasurable, and her modesty similar to that of her father and also friend, Noam Chomsky.

Shortly before, I had very different experiences. The last one was with one of the stars of CNN and TIME magazine, who at the time had written a book that I read in an airport. When I contacted him in September 2015, he responded very kindly and referred me to his representatives at RCI, Royce Carlton Inc., who immediately got in touch with me regarding the requirements and fee for a 40-minute lecture: "*$85,000 plus First Class expenses*." From previous experiences, I knew that with *first class expenses* they were referring not only to the tickets and reasonable travel costs but also to details like a room for his secretary or similar requirements. I shared the fee and conditions with my colleagues on the committee in charge of organizing the event. There was unanimous agreement to reject the generous offer, which, for forty minutes, exceeded the annual salary of

any of the professors on the committee. Nevertheless, the company, which has on its roster of clients beauties like Nicole Kidman, athletes like Magic Johnson, and business geniuses who dedicate themselves to preaching the new gospel of success, harassed me via email and phone calls for over a month to accept third-tier speakers, each of whom charged only "*$27,500 plus First Class*" for 40 minutes.

This is the reality of the most visible faces of the media that shape public opinion—that is, not those who make the most important decisions. Words are counted in dollars. It is the ideology of the press and the corporations they serve, and for which the most effective and obedient servants are rewarded. It is not absurd to claim that when the world's major press repeats something insistently, one should assert the opposite to exponentially increase the chances of being on the side of historical truth. For an obvious reason: aside from the armies of superpowers, the major media outlets are the primary instruments of national and global domination. They are not neutral, no matter how much effort the journalists working there put in. They do not reflect reality; they create it. These dominant media, which occasionally clash as if they were different entities (as in the case of CNN and Fox News), not only express the ideology of a tiny financial class to which they belong or on which they depend, but for decades they have not stopped their frenzied process of accumulation and concentration. This is no different from the reality of the rest of the economy and the distribution of wealth in their countries and the rest of the world.

In the specific case of media in the United States, the concentration in fewer hands began in the 1940s and accelerated in recent decades. Even, and not without irony, when digital networks emerged, which promised a decentralization of power and, consequently, a greater democratization of societal realities and geopolitics. This was no different from what happened with the internet in the 1990s, during its first decade of commercialization and privatization. During the same decade, independent cinemas practically disappeared. The same happened with book publishing houses. By 1998, 80 percent of the book market was already in the hands of the two giant bookstores, Barnes & Noble and Borders. By 2011, Borders had already disappeared, and Barnes & Noble had closed in most shopping malls. Amazon remained, the new predator, which began by eliminating competition in the book market and continued in almost

every other sector, leading to the closure of small shops and other giants like RadioShack, Sears, and Toys 'R' Us.

The market demands commercial products. That is, the new mercantilist dogma only blessed cultural products that were sellable, easy to consume, and digestible. In other words, culture of *distraction*, anesthetizing culture, hostile to radical critique or any intellectual effort. The most successful products were, for example, the series *Beavis and Butt-Head* (*Beavis and Butt-Head*) for adults and, for children, the successful series of *Captain Underpants* (Scholastic, 2002), *I Need a New Butt (I Need a New Butt,* Dover, 2014) or *No One Likes a Fart* (*No One Likes a Fart*, Penguin, 2020). That is, and not because of the words used but because of their content, anti-culture or, at least, not "radical culture."

Almost everywhere in the world, the book industry and market have undergone the same concentration, and consequently, to some extent, this has impacted the production and emergence of writers. While new digital technologies have multiplied the appearance of books and writers (often writers who don't read), the concentration of publishing lobbies has reduced their chances of distribution and advertising to a select few, with an intellectual profile as simplified as McDonald's diverse menu. After all, for the market and its ideology, the difference between a hamburger and a book is zero. A book and an author are products and must be treated as such, albeit under different narratives. But at their core, they are the same. A "super new fried chicken," the "latest Ford," "the new Tesla," and the new literary saga of "The poor orphan who became a millionaire" all equally include *mystery*, *adventure*, *surprise*, *flavor*, *revenge*, *eroticism*, and *immediate satisfaction* without effort.

For major publishing houses, literary quality doesn't matter; what matters is an author's marketability. The only (reasonable) condition is that they write well so that the frequent amateur critics in major newspapers can do their job of flattering the chosen one. For the market, "writing well" means producing "an easy and quick read," including as many predictable ingredients as a McDonald's hamburger—lots of fat, salt, and sugar—as we explained earlier, two ancestral needs exploited by the market and turned into poison in a world of superabundance of these elements, which were scarce for hundreds of thousands of years.

In this process of cultural commercialization and market neoliberalization, since the 1980s, both in the United States, Europe, and Latin America, independent publishers have been disappearing. Those that

survive do so thanks to the efforts of authors who barely earn royalties or even finance their own books with the salary from another job. The same goes for editors: those who don't barely survive by publishing all kinds of proposals and organizing family presentations in various venues every month often finance their own dreams until they retire. Even beyond. It has been thanks to these last ones that culture, radical culture, has survived, albeit barely.

Commercialization has also reached literary awards, which have become even more corrupt than they already were. Those few publishing houses that award tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars in prizes, not infrequently, award them to their own authors, even though most contestants submit their work under pseudonyms. On the other hand, at the base of the pyramid of mercantile and media power, countless literary awards have been created with a hundred or two hundred categories and subcategories, awarding three or four books in each, charging each participant a fee for the privilege of being considered.[cxxxii]

In the same vein, we could say that platforms like YouTube democratized the production of audiovisual content, which, to some extent and due to admirable examples, is true. But this is a side effect and an unintended one for those who hold concentrated media power. One should not judge power relations by their exceptions but by their general effects, just as one cannot condone racism and the oppression of the slave system because, in its time, there were also free Black people and some of them were successful owners of Black slaves. It would suffice to take a look at the "independent YouTubers" who occupy the top spots in the popularity or subscriber rankings. Most, if not all, confirm the anesthetic culture of distraction, fragmentation, and the frivolity of consumerism, all in line with the book successes mentioned earlier. In fact, even obscene language has been normalized as a sign of distinction: "*what the fuck, bro!*"; "*shut up, bitch*", "*lick this, nig…*" [cxxxiii]

[cxxxii] A few years ago, I was asked to be part of an international jury for one of these competitions. To vote, I had to read dozens of novels in an impossible number of days, so after accepting, I had to resign. I assume that whoever took my place at least read the titles and maybe the biographies of some of the candidates before voting for their favorite. I assume the organizers considered the votes in each of the creatively generous genres.

[cxxxiii] It may surprise you that I wrote *fuck* and *bitch* but not "the N-word." Well, since I'm a professor and in the United States, the hypocritical culture has forced professors to resign for once using it to quote racist documents, and I don't intend to lose the war over an absurd battle, so there I used an asterisk.

Certainly, nonsense has always existed, but before it stayed at the bar table. The new effect is not only that it can now be published by everyone, but companies like YouTube, Instagram, or TikTok encourage the production and reproduction of these frivolities (and, in some cases, toxic destruction) with the payment of royalties, however minimal they may be. The market not only makes foolishness and the most primitive basic emotions like anger and hatred (basic components of survival in prehistoric times) visible, but it also promotes and amplifies them according to its own commercial rules.

In turn, the groups that own book publishing houses are also part of the production of commercial music, films, perfumes ("Mickey for Kids" and "Mickey Unlimited" for adults), and the *snacks* sold at the entrance of movie theaters, which, in turn, appear in the films shown in their theaters and in other media like the channels offered by cable and Internet companies that, in turn, are owned by a handful of large companies that produce films, whose boards are made up of members of the boards of other legally "independent" companies. The *joint ventures* ensure that a handful of billionaires entrench themselves in different markets, making the interests of one favor and be favored by the interests of the other, while giving the impression that there is real competition among a larger number of economic agents. According to Robert McChesney, by the early 2000s, 81 individuals were members of the boards of 104 companies on the *Fortune 1000* list.[340] By the late 90s, a handful of CEOs were the feudal lords of the media. For the *New York Times*, changing this reality was simply impossible. For *Business Week*, the situation wasn't so bad, because the six CEOs of the major media companies that dominated the information and entertainment market hated each other so much that it guaranteed the protection of the public interest.[341] Another Newtonian ad hoc, as naive as Adam Smith's, who believed that the great social disparities of the free market economy would be solved thanks to the good hearts of the rich.

As if this weren't enough, the FTC (Federal Trade Commission), the U.S. government office responsible for controlling free competition and defending consumer rights, is the least qualified to control anything. According to the Wall Street Journal on October 13, 2022, that same office, "*the main regulatory body for U.S. companies also houses the most active Wall Street investors in Washington*."[342] Among the stocks bought and sold by its director are those of Facebook, at the same time that the same office was

investigating the social network for possible crimes or, to put it in fashionable euphemisms, "malpractice" or "sheltered by legal exceptions." This reality, which believers of the dogma call *success* or *meritocracy* that benefits the rest of society, not only means multibillion-dollar profits for these few companies but also the disappearance of any competition that does not possess this infrastructure of power. This phenomenon has accelerated in recent decades, not only in national markets but also internationally.

In the dizzying race toward concentration and commercial simplification of culture, there is also the destruction of diversity—both ecological and cultural. Globalization was, in reality, a McDonaldization. One example: in 1970, in the United States, movie theaters showed at least 10 percent foreign films. By the 90s, that percentage had dropped to less than one percent, and today there is practically no theater that includes at least one foreign-produced film in its lineup, much less if the popcorn-munching audience has to read subtitles. The anti-globalization phenomenon was not due to a change in the interest of U.S. consumers but to the growing McDonaldized monopoly of more-of-the-same from the national cartel.

In 1980, only fifteen firms had a monopoly over the entire media sector in the United States, and just twenty years later, there were ten. Among these, Time Warner, Disney, Viacom, Seagram, News Corporation (owned by Rupert Murdoch), and Sony were the dominant players.[343] Currently, and especially due to the relaxation of *antitrust* (anti-monopoly) regulations amid neoliberal euphoria and all guaranteed by the new media law of 1996, the "Telecommunications Act," the oligopoly has become a "co-managed monopoly" by five giants. This monopolistic cartel (AT&T Inc., Verizon Communications Inc., Comcast Corp., and Charter Communications Inc.) take 25 percent of all household bill payments every month.[344] As a result of this vocation of the champions of the free market and free competition to destroy competition, American consumers do not receive better service than in other countries where, in fact, the internet is even free for students. This is the case in Uruguay, where in 2007 the government implemented the "Ceibal" program (Educational Connectivity of Basic Computing for Online Learning), through which even the poorest

children and high school students could access a laptop and free internet connection.[cxxxiv]

Shortly after, blogs emerged, promising greater democratization of the media. However, for the most part, blogs, and later social media, essentially reproduced and limited themselves to commenting on what was published in the mainstream press. To some extent, this practice continues, likely because the mainstream press still maintains an aura of authority, even in cases like many countries where they were the primary channels for fake news to prepare and then support military dictatorships for the benefit of foreign corporations.[cxxxv]

The power that a small publication without a large investment in "visibility" can have is the same as that of neighborhood newspapers before the internet. Or perhaps less. When someone who is not an expert on a topic seeks to confirm information, they generally dismiss it if it only appears on platforms like Twitter or Instagram, but take it more seriously if the news has been reproduced by more prestigious outlets like the *New York Times*, *Le Monde* from Paris, or *El País* from Madrid, or *El Mercurio* from Chile. None of these major outlets is infallible, and they are often full of errors and a long history of manipulating public opinion, but the chances of publishing deliberately fabricated information are lower than on social media. To lie, it is not necessary to publish falsehoods. In fact, it is not advisable.

On the other hand, the major difference in the manipulation of information lies in its definition of what matters and what is irrelevant. What matters appears multiple times in headlines and on front pages. What does not matter, even if it is as real or more important than the former, is relegated to secondary pages or does not reach the level of repetition, which is the main factor in the *creation of reality*. A massacre of a hundred people in Yemen does not exist. The same massacre in Ukraine is real. Eleven people killed in an attack in Paris moves the world; hundreds

---

[cxxxiv] Uruguay was the first country in the world to successfully implement the proposal of MIT professor Nicholas Negroponte. Four years later, it was also adopted by Peru. The project was developed by the American non-profit organization *One Laptop per Child*. The project was later commercialized in other countries, with a corresponding increase in price.

[cxxxv] If you ask an AI like ChatGPT about the most important newspaper in Chile, it will summarize everything in a few paragraphs praising El Mercurio, referring to its prestige and completely omitting the fact that it was the medium that channeled CIA money in several elections and actively promoted the destruction of democracy in 1973. The same story applies to almost all other major newspapers in Latin America.

of people killed in Africa are not dead, much less true victims, because they do not hurt. If the dead are Palestinian, they are terrorists, even if they are no more than fifteen years old. No one claims, as in the past, that some races of humans do not feel the pain of losing their children as much as whiter races, but their actions and reactions suggest that if that is not what is thought, it is at least what is felt.

According to Sergey Sanovich, one of the strategies of the Russian channel RT is to publish non-political but proven viral videos, such as cat videos, to attract an audience to their more political programs.[345] Something that, in reality, is a universal strategy, not just Russian. More recently, especially in the traditional and dominant media of dependent countries, there has been a relative investment in this dynamic. On a daily basis, these newspapers and television channels echo viral phenomena from platforms like Twitter and amplify them. It is no longer a small army of paid bots planting a topic for honorary bots and the rest of real users to viralize, but rather the established press with some prestige or disproportionate social impact. This perfectly resembles the practices revealed by the Church Commission of the CIA during the Cold War: the inoculation of traditional media, with a preference for print media, with the understanding that the rest of the oral media and the population would take care of making it go viral. In the world of social media, a viral news story is the equivalent of a newspaper headline or a television news report in the 20th century.

In 2018, California legislator Dianne Feinstein proposed regulating bots with the aim of preventing foreign interference in the 2020 presidential elections. In her argument, she stated that "*Americans deserve to know who is behind political content on the Internet in order to make informed decisions*." We will not comment on the historical double standard applied to the rest of the world, especially Africa and Latin America, because we have already addressed that in *La frontera salvaje*. What is important to point out now is that these regulations have been ineffective and even impossible to enforce on platforms that apply their own laws in their own country and in foreign countries. Corporations and millionaires shield themselves behind the First Amendment of the United States, which guarantees freedom of speech. However, little or nothing is discussed about the fact that the First Amendment or freedom of speech has little or nothing to do with bots, just as the decisions of information manipulation by mega-platforms have nothing to do with the First Amendment or any

freedom of speech. Rather, it falls under the "freedom of enterprise," a principle that even drug traffickers could claim in their defense.[cxxxvi] No one is concerned that the U.S. government invests as many millions of dollars as the entire GDP of Uruguay in secret agencies dedicated to harassing, demonizing, and silencing journalists and researchers who are inconvenient and ideologically opposed—all in the recurring and unquestionable name of National Security.

Just as Google Books capitalizes on the cultural heritage of printed books by offering them digitally, digital platforms like Facebook or Twitter make their billions largely by selling the products of traditional media, since, with the exception of *Yahoo News*, they do not offer any independent investigations. Not to mention the fact that their customers are, in reality, their employees; with the difference that they no longer get paid for their work but instead pay to produce content.

New social networks, old narratives

"*Internet is a superior instrument to television. It is a true communication channel, as it has surpassed the one-way sender-receiver relationship of previous inventions. With the Internet, many things have been lost for dictators in power: censorship and the manipulation of information. This does not mean that the metaphysical creature is free from other dangers, such as, for example, optimism and lack of critical thinking. Let us not forget that racism, insults, vulgarity, misinformation, and even typographical errors are an epidemic on the Internet*."
Critique of Pure Passion, 1998.

IN 2016, AMERICAN SOCIETY found itself in the midst of an unacceptable scandal: apparently, an army of Russian hackers had interfered in the elections that resulted in Donald Trump's victory. It goes without saying that

[cxxxvi] Laws protect this "freedom of enterprise" over the freedom of individuals to know the truth because it is the founding principle of capitalism, not democracy. Laws protect the megacorporations that write them or lobby for them to be written, legalizing their corruption and their exploitation of the rest of society. On the other hand, some drugs are legal (like opioids, which kill 100,000 people a year in the United States) and others are illegal: pharmaceutical companies benefit from legality to maintain their empires, and drug cartels benefit from illegality for the same reasons. Both, legal and illegal, are the ultimate expression of capitalism.

this outrage was and is, at the same time, a display of hypocrisy by government agencies and another example of ignorance by the rest of the population, considering Washington's practices of intervening not only in elections but also in coups d'état around the world for the past couple of centuries. Not a few Democratic politicians demanded a recount, as in the case of Michigan, but this recount was halted by an order from Judge Mark Goldsmith, arguing that the Green Party candidate, Jill Stein, had failed to prove that her complaint of electoral irregularities affected her *directly*.

More important than the possibility that hackers could somehow manipulate electronic voting systems is the manipulation of public opinion. Any interference in voting machines can be discovered, and any discovery can prove the deception or illegitimacy of any election. On the other hand, the manipulation of public opinion is much harder to prove. Even if it were possible, those who were deceived or simply supported the option favored by the deception would resist believing it or would argue that in election campaigns, advertising is inevitable and is exercised by all political actors. Therefore, the responsibility falls on the people, on the voters, who can never be questioned in their legitimacy after an election. The people also have the right to be wrong. This is the simple reason why the manipulation of public opinion, carried out through narrative propaganda or the very algorithms that govern the nature of social networks, is always safer and more effective. Once a portion of the population's minds have been hacked, those very people will become the greatest defenders of the hackers themselves, who will never be called by that name but rather *leaders*, and the lies will be canonized as "the truth that the agents of evil (villains on the margins, infiltrators in education and government) don't want you to know." A perfect and self-contained epistemological business. As one of my characters in *Memories of a Disappeared* (1996) said, "*there is no better strategy against a true rumor than to invent a false one that pretends to confirm it*."

Trump's election in 2016, like Obama's in 2008 and that of nearly all U.S. presidents, including the crucial one of James Polk in 1844, was due to "surprises" of the right man in the right place at the right time. Trump's campaign aligned with the cultural and psychological parameters of the moment: a white middle class enraged by the progressive and unstoppable loss of privileges, both nationally and internationally. A mass of intellectually unsophisticated voters, who needed to be spoken to in an even more simplified manner than George W. Bush had done at the

beginning of the century, but reflecting the frustration of the indebted worker in the mirror of the furious millionaire.

As always, the scapegoats were the weakest groups, especially those who couldn't vote: the millions of dark-skinned undocumented workers. Just as we wrote in 2008 that Obama hadn't changed any history but had intersected with it, the same can be said of Trump: it's not that an individual with so little intellectual insight understood the moment, but rather that the moment hit the jackpot with him. To the frustration of the white ethnicity over its social and economic decline was added the offense of living through two terms under a mulatto president (for this culture, black or "African American"). This led to a revival of nativism, the Minutemen, the Tea Party, and various white supremacist groups. There was an explosion of veiled references in favor of the symbols and values of the South, such as the Confederate flag, the racist groups of the KKK, among others. All groups that, ironically, had been the only ones to actually bring this country to the brink of disappearance in the 19th century and who, ironically, considered and still consider themselves the champions of patriotism, the defenders of the country against the invasion of illegal immigrants who come to steal our jobs, rape our women, and kill our youth in the streets.

All this frustration and these paradoxical discourses in the name of a tradition that was strictly the opposite met another paradox at the right moment. The simple rhetoric of then-candidate Donald Trump not only focused on these 19th-century fears (mulattos are rapists and want to replace the chosen race) but also used the favorite tools of the new Middle Ages: social media. In 2016, Trump defeated the traditional propaganda machinery of Republicans and Democrats due to two clear factors.

First, he beat his opponent, Hillary Clinton, despite receiving three million fewer votes (a detail that would haunt him throughout his presidency, claiming, without any basis, that this difference was due to illegal immigrants voting in the election). This, which would be unacceptable in any democratic country where one voter equals one vote, was due to the unequal logic of an electoral system inherited from 19th-century slavery. On the other hand, and beyond his love affair with the Fox News network, his mass phenomenon was based on social media. Again, with deep irony, because his rhetoric against immigrants and foreigners was amplified by an army of fake accounts, bots, and real people working from abroad. In just the first months of his presidential campaign, which

began in 2015, 58 percent of these social media profiles were based outside the U.S. Four percent were Mexicans residing in Mexico.[346]

This paradoxical phenomenon of social media had a precedent in 2010, when the Senate seat left vacant by the death of Senator Ted Kennedy in Massachusetts was won by a Republican after nearly forty years. The phenomenon was known as the "Twitter bomb," due to the massive support the Republican candidate Scott Brown received on Twitter. Every user received a response from a bot to their comments, most of them from outside the state. Brown, the Tea Party candidate, won the 2009 primary with *89 percent* of the vote and in 2010 secured the Senate seat in Washington, D.C. As with everything on social media, the overwhelming popularity lasted for a year and a few months. In 2012, he was defeated by Elizabeth Warren. Barack Obama would use the same resource for the 2012 elections.

According to Woolley's research, one of the strategies of computational propaganda by bots in various countries is to "disrupt political dialogue." Even a small group of a few dozen individuals or a few hundred automated bots interacting with each other as if it were a real discussion can start a trend or viralize any news or idea injected into a specific population facing the dilemma of an electoral act or the creation or resolution of a social crisis. According to Woolley, the platforms of major social networks limit access to their data and algorithms for academics. Some, like Facebook and YouTube, simply do not provide the necessary data to assess the degree of reality manipulation that stems from their own algorithms and, since 2016, they do not allow researchers to study them.[cxxxvii]

Social networks are not regulated by the laws of countries, which is why they often become no man's land in terms of their rights and obligations. In the second decade of the century, there was an attempt to regulate the use and functioning of social networks in Brazil, but technological changes continue to outpace legislators, aside from the impossibility of monitoring activities on platforms like WhatsApp and the never-resolved conflict between privacy and manipulation. The process of regulation and legislation is extremely slow and uninformed regarding new technologies.

At a time when the very developers of Artificial Intelligence warn of the urgency of regulating this new technology, to avoid the "extinction

[cxxxvii] Wooley, Samuel. *The Reality Game*. P. 23-29.

of the human species," the laws of countries have barely caught up with the tail end of the reality of social networks. As with the case of massive public debts, most people, surely unconsciously, trust that these bombs will explode in some future generation, and they, politicians and governors already elderly, will never live to see the catastrophe of their own actions.

One could argue that disinformation is anarchic, that it responds to the generalized chaos of new media, but if this resulted in a homogeneous, non-hierarchical space, it would be an epistemological problem rather than a political one. Its political significance lies in the fact that this apparent chaos or anarchy privileges the powerful sectors, starting with the power of capital, financial power, followed by the power of dominant societal narratives, and culminating in the powerful secret agencies of wealthy countries with a clear and consistent ideology hidden behind old excuses like "national security."

Neomedievalism vs Enlightenment

THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL HISTORY of the last few centuries has been quite consistent: on one side, conservatives who opposed and continue to oppose major advancements in favor of *equal-liberty* (that is, real democracy) and, on the other, what has long been called the *left* (liberals, progressives, socialists), which had to confront established social, political, religious, and ideological powers to fight in the 19th century against slavery and colonialism, against the exploitation of the working classes, for the *8-8-8* hour workday and other human rights like paid vacations or healthcare coverage; against imperialism and against racial, sexual, and gender discrimination throughout the 20th century. Conservatives only embraced these demands when they became inevitable or did not pose a threat to their concentrated power, as was the case with the legal (not economic) independence of colonies, the acceptance of racial integration, or equal rights for women and homosexuals, to name a few. Over time, the left and the right appeared as the two hands of the same body (in English, it's called "*left and right-wings*," that is, two wings of the same bird). This metaphor, this visualization, is a perfect deception of two realities that,

while in partisan political games may be the same thing from different perspectives, in their deeper sense, it is not about a horizontal order (left and right) but a vertical one (those above and those below), which is more realistic and, clearly, much more dramatic.

In general terms, without a *redistribution of power*, there is no *distribution of freedom*, and without this, there is no *democracy*. Both democracy and power are instruments of freedom and justice, as we have understood them in recent centuries. However, it is possible that we are not in a directly proportional relationship, that is, in a straight line or a progressive curve without inflections (the more fragmentation of power, the more democracy and equal-freedom), but rather in a kind of bell curve.

For example, on a Cartesian graph, we can place on the x-axis a progression ranging from (a) an absolute government (x=0) to (z) absolute and self-regulated anarchy (x=10), and on the y-axis, we distribute the degree of religious fanaticism, starting from (a') a radically secular or atheist society (y=0) to another (z') theocratic or sectarian society (y=10). We could speculate that in secular societies with centralized governments, like China, their position would be: $x\rightarrow0$; $y\rightarrow0$. The Middle Ages or Feudal period could be placed at the top of the curve ($x\rightarrow5$; $y\rightarrow10$) with fragmented political power, that of the feudal lords, but not anarchic-democratic. The extreme $x\rightarrow10$; $y\rightarrow0$ signifies a break with the Middle Ages where the fragmentation of power has surpassed the maximum curve of religious sectarianism, rendering it ineffective as a binding force (religion, *re-ligare*) of concentrated power and independent of the feudal lords of the Middle Ages or the financial elites of our time. Obviously, the transition beyond this critical point ($x\rightarrow5$; $y\rightarrow10$) cannot occur without a general upheaval, a conflict likely on a global scale.

So far, the atomization of information and unifying narratives has largely dismantled the near-absolute power of the great states during the 20th century, both capitalist powers and the communist bloc of the Soviet Union. This dismantling was amplified by new digital technologies, by the Internet of Information and the Internet of Things, so that the Secret Agencies of the world's most powerful governments have had to multiply their budgets and sophistication several times to maintain their dominance in the face of the atomization of the production and dissemination

of information by users and private companies.[cxxxviii] However, this atomization has been hijacked by mega-corporations, the modern equivalent of feudal lords. Meanwhile, religious and nationalist fanaticism has taken on the role of the unifying narratives of the medieval religious era. That is, the atomization of power and information has not distanced us from sectarian fanaticism, from *fake news,* from conspiracy theories based on private faith and lacking factual support, but rather the opposite.

What, then, would be a model for a new paradigm where, beyond the peak of the bell curve, we encounter a self-regulated anarchism, with more democratic societies open to the natural diversity of human nature? In 2008, in *Dictionary of Alternative Thought*, edited by the Argentine philosopher Hugo Biagini, we proposed in "The Disobedient Society" a case that still catches our attention today for its uniqueness: Wikipedia.[347] Beyond the legitimate criticisms of this encyclopedia, its example of self-regulation outweighs its weaknesses and conflicts. In fact, it is possible to argue that many historical truths that in the past were generated and established as dogmas by the victorious geopolitical powers have been questioned and reversed to some extent by millions of anonymous editors. Why does the anonymity and near-anarchy of Wikipedia work in favor of factual truth backed by evidence and documents, and not the anarchic anonymity of platforms like 4Chan, a breeding ground for the most delusional falsehoods like those of the Flat Earthers?

Continuing with this speculation, we could assume that we are at some point on the ascending curve, with the questioning of the Enlightenment paradigm and a sustained rise of medieval feudalism. In one of the most important battlefields, the narrative one, almost all the dialectical, argumentative, and militant energy is focused on political disputes (that is, the struggle for power through the distraction of passions), and it is more than likely that we can summarize it as a clash between the Enlightenment and the Middle Ages, between rational dialectics and faith,

[cxxxviii] By 2001, the NSA had intercepted two hundred million emails and phone calls. By 2021, of the 5,550 satellites orbiting the Earth, the private company SpaceX alone owned 1,655. On the other end, millions of users without corporate power also recorded news and published it from their phones. According to the documents revealed by Edward Snowden, in the first thirty days of 2013, the NSA intercepted and stored three trillion communications just from the U.S. communications system. As Edward Snowden reveals in his book *Permanent Record*, based on the NSA documents he himself leaked, the "Black Budget" of 2013 consisted of $52.6 billion solely for the Intelligence Community, composed of 107,035 employees (of which 21,800 were outsourced contracts).

between tolerance for diversity and tribal fanaticism, between the cosmopolitan and the provincial.

We are still ascending toward the peak of what we titled in 2004 as "The Mental Frontiers of Tribalism."[348] Nearly two decades later, in 2022, Colonel, Senator, and Republican candidate for governor of Pennsylvania, Doug Mastriano, claimed that the separation of church and state "is a myth…; *we will take back the government, my God will make it so*." Mastriano is a member of the far-right group Patriots Arise; like many descendants of American immigrants with non-Anglo-Saxon surnames, the need to confirm their integration drives them to become *super-patriots* and *ultra-Americans* so that others consider them *almost-Americans*.

Of course, neomedievalism goes beyond the homeland, though it shares national and religious roots. That same year, in Georgia, Kandiss Taylor, a candidate for governor, campaigned under the slogan "JESUS, GUNS, AND BABIES." In all cases, the mix of sectarian beliefs like QAnon, detached at will from reality and the need to provide any evidence to confirm their hypotheses—which they call faith—is a common factor. In Colorado, Representative Lauren Boebert stated: "*The church is supposed to lead the government, not the other way around*." To the applause of the audience, she concluded, with that touch of "I," so characteristic of Protestant culture: "*I'm tired of this separation of church and state nonsense*."[349] Not without paradox, the defenders of loose interpretations of the Second Amendment to protect the free use of arms rely on the knee-jerk reaction of "the good old days" and a theological reading of the Constitution, according to which the true interpretation must align with the original intent of the drafters, that is, the Founding Fathers. With exceptions as convenient, as in any religious sect. One of the principal drafters of the founding texts and even of extensive interpretive books was Thomas Jefferson, also known as "the father of American democracy." Let's set aside the deep contradictions of Jefferson and his founding contemporaries between theory and practice. Like the rest of the Founding Fathers, Jefferson was a secularist and unequivocally affirmed the urgency of erecting "a wall of separation between church and state." After his death, he was banned from libraries for being an atheist.

In the clash of a weakened Enlightenment and an energized Middle Ages, *religion* and *politics*, though never completely dissociated, are once again mixed with the fanaticism of the crusaders. The groups that argue and fight over schools of art, film, literature, philosophy, cuisine,

and clothing are practically irrelevant in number and in the passion invested by social media users. In this sense, even soccer fanatics pale in comparison to the importance of these conflicts. So too do the oldest religious disputes, which, in a less disguised form, are reduced to their political factors, to the dispute over truth—translation: the struggle for power.

This is due to a tribalistic culture where hatred is more important than love, combat more important than collaboration or understanding the other, and nationalism has much less to do with love for a country than with the need to fight fellow citizens who think differently. What unites them is not love, but hatred and fear. As we will see, the market of distraction and entertainment has political and ideological roots, like the ideology of the market and consumerism that idolize fame and success, now reduced merely to the "visibility" of viral events and influencer figures. Under this premise, bots and fake accounts are primarily focused on political battles. It's no coincidence that the market for fake accounts solely to boost "*influencers*" on social media exceeds a billion dollars annually.[350]

It's more than likely that within a couple of decades, this phenomenon of social media and virtual existence in front of a screen will be just history. It's a natural law that one generation tries to distance itself from the habits of the previous one, and it's also probable that there will be a fatigue from the plague of immediate opinions on any topic. Why give your own opinion if it's not even your own and machines will opine better?[cxxxix]

Close your eyes and believe

AS JOSEPH GOEBBELS HIMSELF SUMMARIZED, using repetition, it's possible to convince people that a circle is, in fact, a square. "*Propaganda works best when those being manipulated are confident they are acting of their own free will*." Hannah Arendt, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, observed that "*the ideal subject of a totalitarian government is not the convinced Nazi or*

[cxxxix] On this topic, see our essay "La opinión propia y otras banalidades," April 21, 2015. *El País*, Madrid.

Communist, but those people for whom the distinction between reality and fiction, between true and false, no longer exists."[351] This intellectual habit based on faith and repetition (what is it, if not a rosary?) fits better with the medieval mindset than with that of the Enlightenment.

A Virginia teacher, Kara Kimball, summarized her students' thinking this way: "*They tell me that if something has gone viral, then it must be true*." Many young people are convinced that "*my friends wouldn't post something that isn't true*." According to a Stanford University study conducted with 7,800 students across the country, titled "Evaluating Information: The Cornerstone of Civic Online Reasoning", the reality is exactly the opposite of the new dogma. More than half of high school students fail to distinguish the difference between fake news, simple advertising, and a real fact supported by data and evidence. According to Professor Sam Wineburg, the lead author of the report, "*many assume that because young people dominate social media, they are equally perceptive about what they find there… our work shows that, in reality, it's the opposite*." In fact, 80 percent of students identified ads labeled as "sponsored content" as factual information.[352]

This may catch the attention of the previous generation, their parents, who, in turn, had normalized the idea that a press that survives on ad sales was a reliable press. As Robert W. McChesney mentions in his monumental book *Rich Media, Poor Democracy* (1999), in the 1930s, the years of the Great Depression and the New Deal, Americans organized to create non-commercial media while the idea of a press paid for by ads was only accepted by a minority.

The media developed in the 20th century and the more recent social networks are proof of how humanity is capable of continuing to make astonishing technological progress while simultaneously continuing to make no less astonishing regressions in its capacity for critical thinking. For millennia, from religious figures, philosophers, and scientists to peasants and artisans, the ideas of "truth" and "reality" were subjects of endless discussions. But these discussions and the awareness of the problematic nature of both were always exceptional moments; normally, they were axioms that framed the reality within which an individual, a people, lived. Outside of a myth and outside the Universe, there is no space or time.

Even without being aware of this problem, social power always tried to define what was *real* and what was *true*. From an ontological discussion, it moved to an epistemological one, until reaching the semantic,

semiotic, and political struggle of the sophists. However, in any case, there was a consensus: both reality and truth and their opposites, fantasy and lies, existed.

That consensus is dying. In fact, the discussion between reality and fiction, truth and lies is being replaced by "online reality" and "offline reality", which are the same except for their format. Soon, there will be no difference between the two, or consumers will no longer be able to see it. Just as something was considered real in the 20th century if it appeared on television or in a newspaper headline, now that reality is governed by the viral nature of an event. But the viral phenomenon is designed within that digital and social media metaverse.

In the current neomedievalism, rational critique and the analysis of material facts, which began as a revolution in the Muslim world during the European Middle Ages and radicalized in Europe with humanism, the experimental science of the 17th century, and finally the Enlightenment, continues to give way to the mindset of the religious believer who, even while acknowledging the possibility of a fact, closes their eyes and spreads "alternative facts" that confirm their desires. Desire is confused with reality. If one has power, reality changes. If not, it's the believer who suffers. An almost perfect process, since the believer's last resort when faced with a reality that has just crushed them will always be denial.

A well-known case is that of *Breitbart*, the far-right platform in the United States that managed to surpass major media outlets like the conservative Fox News in social media references. According to its creator Steve Bannon (media strategist and advisor to President Donald Trump), social media are "weapons of war." Nothing new, as traditional media has always been an instrument of war in the service of the powerful and the owners of capital, but at least its paradigm (the motto of young journalists) was identified with the professional pursuit of truth.

Platforms like *Breitbart* positioned themselves between traditional media and those publishing parodies, such as *The Onion*, so their consumers got a mix of real facts with fake news, like the infiltration of Al Qaeda members among poor immigrants from Central America. Among a long list of fake news and conspiracy theories, *Breitbart* "made real" events that never happened, such as the assault and burning of a Christian church in Germany by a mob of a thousand Muslim immigrants, and denied others under the accusation of conspiracies, like the evidence of Climate Change. As if it were any product, their consumers get what they desire and

promote the product that satisfies them. Singer and Brooking mention that, by 2016, 59 percent of the links included in the news shared by social media consumers had never been opened. Much less verified.

Media technology journalist John Herrman observed that these platforms do not aim to analyze anything but rather jump from a statement to confirmation. "*After the headline, they never discuss, they only reveal*," he wrote in 2014.[353] This last word is highly significant: the attitude of revealing, along with that of believing (especially against all evidence or logic), is a central part of thousands of years of religious history.

Another form of reality denial is entertainment. The need to be entertained is a psychological component, as it distracts attention and, therefore, the tension from a complex and hostile reality. Just as addiction to sugar and fats stems from a prehistoric scarcity of both, just as the need to consume scandalous news (sexual or criminal) stems from a survival reflex over hundreds of thousands of years, so too its opposite, entertainment, may stem from this instinct to release tension—no other is the psychological function of laughter.

Translated to today's reality: in the 2016 U.S. election campaign, only about ten percent of the political news produced by professional journalism and shared on social media referred to the policies of the candidates, both their own and their opponents'. From the beginning of the year until the week before the November vote, the three major television networks, ABC, CBS, and NBC, dedicated *a total* of 32 minutes to concrete analysis of the candidates' policies.[354]

Social media is right-wing

IN *CRITIQUE OF PURE PASSION* (1998) AND LATER in articles published in newspapers, we wrote, with enthusiasm, various theories about the marvelous world of centuries past that had lived in Africa and about the almost as interesting world to come. Youth, divine treasure…

In Mozambique, at the Pemba Naval Shipyard, I discovered and collaborated (as a young architect from the Americas, whom hundreds of kind workers mistakenly called "master") in the construction of large 19th-century British and Portuguese ships.

Through the shipyard (the marvelous *umbila* trees were the raw material) and to support a technical school program in the most populated cities, I often traveled for long hours to the "bush" (Ibo, Quisanga, Montepuez, Mueda, Macimboa, Matemo), to tribes far removed from the privilege of the white man, of which I was a part. At the shipyard, I also had contact with the racist Boers from South Africa, with the British-American anti-apartheid writer Joseph Hanlon, and with the son of Mozambican hero Samora Machel and later stepson of Nelson Mandela, Ntuane Machel.

Also with the first computer I ever touched in my life. In Pemba, there was no internet or television (handwritten mail took weeks to reach Uruguay, thanks to which I ended up marrying a former architecture classmate), but the encyclopedias on disks already hinted at what the world would be like in the coming century. Since then, Windows has made no innovations, apart from annoying updates.

In that new world, I thought, every individual, from any corner, would be able to access the most important libraries in the world, and people would be able to decide in monthly or weekly referendums what to do with each project, with each proposal for their country and for the world. We weren't wrong about the libraries.

It's true that we also published a dark suspicion: the idea of a radical democracy, of an advance of freedom as *equal-liberty* and not as the *freedom-of-some-to-enslave-others*, could be suspended in favor of its opposite: the progression of a tribal, nationalist mentality, as a natural reaction.

Let's jump ahead twenty years. Just from 2012 to 2016 (that is, from the re-election of the mulatto president in the United States to the election of the president who revived the old theory of "white genocide"), far-right groups on social media grew by 600 percent. In 2021, an internal analysis by Twitter revealed that its algorithm favors the ideas and interests of the political right, reproducing and amplifying news from conservative media more than progressive media, and messages from right-wing politicians more than those from the left. In some cases, like Canada, the left

received a 43 percent amplification while the right received 167 percent.[355] This without considering that the mainstream press is, as it has been for centuries, in the hands of conglomerates with special economic interests, naturally beneficiaries and benefactors of right-wing ideas. Something similar happens with Facebook, although the company defends itself by arguing that "*the right is better at connecting with people on a visceral level* […] *Right-wing populism is always more attractive*." A Facebook executive added that these appealing contents are based on "*primitive, incredibly strong emotions*" that touch on sensitive topics like "*the nation, security, the other, anger, fear*."[356]

Let's take a look, for example, at the logic behind the development and growth of social media, a legacy of humanity's century-long technological progress, once again hijacked by the powerful of the moment. Its logic is the logic of business, of profit at almost any cost.

How are these profits generated?

By capturing attention, often to the point of alienating the individual, who becomes an addicted consumer believing themselves to be free.

How is the consumer's attention captured?

Not through big ideas but through simple and powerful emotions.

What are these simple and powerful emotions?

According to all studies (from Beihang in China to MIT), negative emotions like anger, rage, and hatred.

What do these emotions produce?

Viral explosions. The *virality* of an event indicates the success of any interaction on social media and is highly valued by honorary consumers and their ultimate beneficiaries, the investors.

What is the purpose of viral phenomena?

Increasing users and hijacking consumer attention. In other words, economic benefits. But economic power and political power sleep together every day.

What is the political effect?

In a complex and diverse world, this effect can benefit any ideology, whether right or left, but the logic of the process and statistics indicate that the right is the primary beneficiary.

Why?

First, because all major social networks are products of megacorporations. Every private company is a dictatorship (in democracies and dictatorships alike). Neither the "virtual community" nor the consumers nor the citizens have a say in how they are managed. Much less in their algorithms and their economic profits. Every big business exudes its own ideology. Its ideology is necessarily conservative, right-wing, from the most primitive capitalism to neoliberalism, libertarianism, and all pro-capitalist fascisms. Just as the left developed within the culture of books, the right has reigned in more mass media like radio (Germany), television (the United States), and now, social media.

Second?

The proven fact that hate and anger dominate these platforms benefits the far right more than the far left.

Is there no hate on the left?

Yes, of course, just as there is love on the right. But what matters here is to consider the state of the overall climate. A leftist group, let's say a revolutionary group that takes up arms, like the enslaved Black people in Haiti during the 1804 revolution, can use hate as a tool for motivation and strength. But hate is not usually the ideological foundation of the left, whose main banners are "equal freedom," that is, the vindication of groups considered oppressed or marginalized by power. The hate of class struggle is a tradition of the right; Marxism only made it conscious. It is not the same to fight for the equal rights of Black people, women, gays, or the poor as it is to oppose this struggle as a knee-jerk reaction to the loss of privileges based on race, gender, social class, or hegemonic nations, in the name of freedom, homeland, civilization, order, and progress. That is hate as a foundation, not as a tool.

Is there a difference between different kinds of hate?

Hate is one, it is a disease, but its causes are multiple. It is not the same as the hate of slaves for their masters, of the exploited for their bosses, of the persecuted for their governments, as the hate that radiates and spreads from abusive power. The slave hates their master for their *actions* and the master hates their slaves *for what they are* (an inferior race). Just as no one with a minimum of culture could confuse machismo with feminism, in the same way, one cannot confuse the patriotism of the revolutionary who fights against the colonizer and the patriotism of the colonizer who fights to exploit the corrupted people. In one, patriotism is vindication and the pursuit of equal rights, independence, equal freedom. In the other, it is the vindication of special rights based on nationality, race, religion, or any other particularity of their intellectual provincialism.

What are the consequences of this electronic business?

Social media expresses the desire for war without the risks of war. Until real war becomes present. This need for confrontation, for channeling frustrations through rhetoric and aggressive body language (the disheveled leader, proudly obscene, calculatedly ridiculous to provoke more negative reactions) is characteristic of the far right on social media. Different from the more formal right of neoliberalism, which preferred the labels of aristocracy. Once all their policies, economic plans, and social promises have failed, they turn to the circus of the far right, to body language rather than the serene dialectical dispute. The culture of books, where the traditional left was educated since the Enlightenment, is replaced by the culture of social media of the right, where immediacy and knee-jerk reactions reign and dominate. Aggression, anger, rage as expressions of mass individualism (not the individual) become uncontrollable and, as if that weren't enough, they become effective in the struggle to colonize semantic fields, truth, and the political power of the moment.

Currently, in Latin America, detailed studies on the activity of social networks according to the degree of ideological radicalization and their hierarchical manipulation are scarce. But we can, once again, take a look at the reality in the United States, which is

generally reproduced in the southern hemisphere with a few years of delay. A Harvard University study on the 2016 presidential elections shows a clear pattern: although the major traditional media outlets such as *New York Times*, *Washington Post* or *PBS* leaned toward the center-left (liberal), social networks like Twitter, traditional media like Fox News, Daily Caller, or the New York Post, and especially alternative and anonymous platforms like 4Chan or Breitbart leaned toward the right. I understand that this, particularly on social media, was due to the dispute between the traditional concept of truth based on verifiable evidence and the new neomedieval perception of personal faith as the foundation of truth. However, even clearer was the distribution published by the research team regarding user activity on social networks: the most active left was the most moderate, while on the right, the majority of the activity corresponded to the far right and new narratives without factual basis, such as "fake news" (see Pizzagate and other examples).[357]

It is also necessary to consider (as suggested by the Inverse Progression Model proposed at the beginning of this book) that once ideological antagonisms are radicalized, elements begin to emerge on both sides that orbit around the claims of their adversary. This phenomenon began to be observed in the United States, once again, in the early 2020s, just as a decade earlier (initially for strategic reasons) the working class began to identify with the right instead of its traditional political space on the left.

Let's consider a couple of examples. The platform *Infowars* is one of the most read by the Western far-right, with an average of ten million visits per month. Encyclopedias and mainstream media label it as a far-right outlet dedicated to fake news and conspiracy theories. It is. Many of its members are known for their racism and xenophobia. However, some reports, such as the one dedicated to the international crimes of Henry Kissinger and David Rockefeller, are based on evidence and documents.[358] More than that: they

express old grievances and demands of the left in almost every country, including the United States.

More recently, perhaps due to his legal troubles and political aspirations, President Donald Trump lashed out on his social media platform *Truth* against American imperialism without calling it that. Trump was never anti-imperialist, especially as president, although he had the merit of not starting a new war, a true rarity for the United States. On March 16, 2023, he published ideas that for decades have been the basis of protests and demands from the left: "*there must be a total commitment to dismantle the entire globalist neoconservative establishment that is perpetually dragging us into endless wars, pretending to fight for freedom and democracy abroad, while turning us into a third-world country and dictatorship*."[359]

First-world dictatorships have always existed and were called democracies.

Illustration, Middle Ages, and Social Media

TRAINED IN THE CULTURE OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT, where complex and comprehensive thinking meant the epistemological framework of a truth with some value, political leftist groups underestimated the medieval effectiveness of the sermon and the fragmented, repetitive prayer of digital Neomedievalism. They also erred (though less generally) in the idea that propaganda or the promotion of a candidate should be based on the promotion of one's own virtues rather than the personal vices of others.

Perhaps the right, the conservatives, did not understand this mistake, but they encountered the phenomenon of social media and the digital world where truth does not matter but what the individual wants the truth to be, successfully inverting the old advice not to confuse desire with reality. Something that reminds us of the speech that President Ronald Reagan (the main contemporary myth of conservatives) gave on March 24, 1983, at the Library of Congress,

repeating the words of historian Henry Commager, but with pride and patriotic satisfaction: "the creation of national myths was never free from conflict; Americans did not believe what was true about the West, but rather what they believed should be true."360

For example, in traditional electoral campaigns, this translates into an old idea, simpler than white rice: it doesn't matter *what* is said about a candidate; what matters is that people are talking about them. *What matters is the attention market*. The more someone is talked about (if it's a ridiculous figure, even better, because people discuss the ridiculous more than the sensible), the better the results. Even though everyone, even drunks, talks about *the truth*, what matters is the number, the quantity. In other words, it's not the qualitative world that matters, what makes the political difference, but the quantitative reality. A character or idea that goes viral is consumed as a relevant, necessary, urgent, even salvational truth—even when the consumer knows they are being deceived, but they want it that way; like the consumer of pornography, they demand a high-quality deception, a believable lie. *Hasn't it been the case for thousands of years that people valued impossible miracles as demonstrations of ultimate truth? Wasn't turning water into wine or bread into gold for centuries a requirement of transcendent truth?*[cxl]

Let's look at some relevant examples in Latin America. In 2014, the Federal University of Espírito Santo observed that bots were used by both candidates in the run-up to the presidential runoff. For the televised debate between Dilma Rousseff and her opponent Aecio Neves, the bots tripled in the first 15 minutes of broadcast, clearly favoring the opposition candidate. Shortly after, the *Muda Mais* movement of the progressive candidate Rousseff denounced fake accounts of Neves on various social media platforms aimed at defaming her. The newspaper *Folha de Sao Paulo* supported this thesis with documents about a businessman who received 130,000 reais (40,000 dollars at 2023 value), well above what the law

[cxl] In the first part of this book, we focused on what we consider to be the basic and constitutive conditions of human beings, which were once survival strengths but, for the modern market, represent weaknesses to be exploited and amplified.

allowed. The year after Dilma Rousseff's victory in October 2014, a law was passed prohibiting companies from contributing large sums of money or investing in social media, but these controls were and remain difficult to implement, as in many cases they intersect with technological changes, privacy rights, and encrypted communication technologies like WhatsApp.

Neves' party used bots on various social media platforms, including WhatsApp, spending 10 million reais (3.1 million dollars at 2023 value). By far, the opposition's campaign in favor of privatizing public companies was superior to that employed by President Rousseff. According to University of Washington researcher Dan Arnaudo, this massive bot campaign by the opposition did not stop after losing the election.[361] The same accounts that supported Neves consistently supported several mass protests in 2015. The Workers' Party mobilized three million accounts and users on social media, in contrast to the more than twenty million of the opposition organized in groups created from scratch, such as *Revoltados Online* and *Vem Pra Rua*, among other protest movements against the government, almost always protests against corruption stemming from scandals like *Operação Lava Jato*, which years later were revealed to have been fabricated by actors more corrupt than those they claimed to investigate, as in the case of Judge Sergio Moro.

This persistent and massive campaign of *astroturfing* (see chapter *Social Relations and Astroturfing*) after the defeat in the 2014 elections produced the expected results. The photographs of police officers demonstrating with large signs that read "*Corrupção não*" or of some of my students from Brazil who were enthusiastic about the presidential candidate, Jair Bolsonaro, "*because he's a military man and the military will fight corruption*" made it possible for President Rousseff to be removed from office by a congress with half of its members under investigation for corruption. The same judicial system that years later would be revealed as corrupt, not only for receiving illegal money but also for proceeding irregularly, four years later prevented the favorite presidential candidate in 2018, former

President Lula da Silva, from running in the elections by sending him to prison in an expedited process. Months later, on July 3, 2019, he was released due to a lack of evidence against him by a jury without the presence of Judge Sergio Moro, who had by then been appointed Minister of Justice and Public Security by the recently elected Captain Jair Bolsonaro.[cxli]

Generally, experts are surprised that bots are relatively inexpensive and accessible to the general public. However, this does not mean a *democratization of manipulation*, as if we look at where bots and fake accounts originate, we will once again see that money is their seed. *If a little money can do a lot, what can't a lot of money do?*

Researchers from the University of São Paulo investigated the real profiles of 571 anti-government protesters in 2015 and found that the overwhelming majority did not trust the country's major political parties. At the same time, they were consumers of fake news. 64 percent were convinced that the Workers' Party, in government through democratic means since 2003, sought to turn Brazil into a communist regime, while 53 percent claimed that the armed wing of the PT was formed by a drug cartel. For those in Latin America who remain skeptical about the importation of narratives created in the United States, 43 percent of these protesters were convinced, just as Trump voters would claim two years later, that Rousseff had won with 50,000 votes from illegal Haitians, paid by the PT to travel and vote in Brazil. On the other hand, 57 percent of the protesters in favor of Rousseff claimed that the United States was behind the protests against the government and in connection with Judge Sergio Moro to take control of Brazilian oil, which at the time was planned to be allocated to more social investment, such as education.

By 2019, researcher Dan Arnaudo understood that "*all these claims were proven false, but were widely shared on social media*." Obviously, the theory about the Haitians is surreal and based on thin air;

[cxli] Due to this social media amplification campaign, content favorable to the Workers' Party in government reached 22 million real users, while opposition content reached 80 million.

the theory of U.S. interference is not only based on a long, documented history but also on the most recent investigations into the corruption of those who claimed to fight corruption. According to Pablo Ortellado and Esther Solano ("*Nova direita nas ruas? Uma análise do descompasso entre manifestantes e os convocantes dos protestos antigoverno de 2015*"), they found that, despite the discontent, 71 percent did not agree to hand over the government to the military. The study concluded that "*although the groups organizing the protests have a liberal and privatizing ideological orientation, the protesters do not share this view, advocating for a state that provides public education, health, and transportation*."[362]

In 2017, recordings were made public of Joesley Batista, a shareholder of the world's largest meatpacking company, in which the appointed president, Michel Temer, gave his approval for the payment of bribes to buy the silence of the former head of the Chamber of Deputies, Eduardo Cunha, sentenced to more than 15 years in prison.[363] Later, multiple cases of corruption by the "anti-corruption" figures were revealed by the American journalist based in Brazil, Glenn Greenwald, and his team *The Intercept*. The recordings revealed the complicity of other relevant members of the Brazilian justice system in charge of the anti-corruption *Operation Car Wash*, including the judge who sent presidential candidate Lula da Silva to prison, Sergio Moro. Since then, journalist Greenwald has been subjected to harassment and threats by President Captain Bolsonaro and his supporters.

Arnaudo himself notes verifiable data when analyzing the municipal elections in Rio where the candidates Marcelo Crivella and Marcelo Freixo faced off, the former a right-wing candidate, singer, and Pentecostal pastor of a megachurch, Universal do Reino de Deus, and the latter a left-wing professor candidate. An investigation by the Federal University of Espírito Santo revealed the use of 3,500 fake Twitter accounts, which published attacks on Professor Freixo at an average of one hundred per day—not only is God told

what to do with prayers; it is also necessary to resort to a massive army of winged bots, invisible to the eyes of those who lack faith.

When Crivella won the election, he denied any connection to the bots.

The Dialectical Ping-Pong

DURING PREHISTORY, THE DOMINANT MEDIUM, oral history, was rich in mythical and allegorical imagery. Time was circular. With writing, time became linear, a limited segment with a beginning and an end. In the Middle Ages, the dominant medium was the illustrative image of the Sunday sermon.

On the foundations of the humanist, essayistic, and later scientific revolution, the European Enlightenment was built, which, over time, would become the philosophical basis for liberals and socialists. In general, it remained the ideological foundation of Western leftists and later, the Global South. Books and ideas became the center of epistemological and ideological legitimacy. At the beginning of the 20th century, the media center returned to the voice, the new orality, thanks to the invention of the radio. U.S. presidents excelled in this art. Shortly after, the Nazi regime in Europe developed the political dominance of the medieval image, previously exploited in Hollywood by businessmen and media moguls. By the 1960s, the image leaped into the immediacy of television. The phenomenon of John F. Kennedy, the first Catholic, descendant of the undesirable Irish of the previous century, could be summarized in the televised debate where the public could see and comment on the sweat on the forehead of his opponent, Vice President Richard Nixon. By then, no one remembered, nor will they ever remember, the dialectical content of that debate.

The 21st century gathered all previous experiences of image, voice, text, and myth. Time ceased to be linear and progressive, exploding into millions of fragments. The individual and society

fragmented at the same speed and scale as the micro-economic elites united and organized into a super-guild, the guild of billionaires, capable of hijacking democracies, all human progress up to that point, and capable of carrying out massive capital strikes to intimidate and harass legitimate or illegitimate governments and their popular narratives; capable of hijacking wealth from entire peoples to half the planet into a hundred hands.

The fragmentation of the individual turned consumer had already begun with the technique of propaganda, but with social media, it radicalized. The intellectual tradition of the Enlightenment and modernity, the reading of long-form books, the articulation of more totalizing or global thoughts, gave way, with pride, to micro-fragmentation and perpetual interruption. Even postmodern philosophers assumed that if the Soviet Union had committed suicide, then any effort to understand reality in its complex totality became an object of contempt under names like "grand narratives" of Modernity, popularized in academia much earlier by authors like Jean-François Lyotard. The discussions in popular cafés that wove complex thoughts gave way to the dialectical Ping-Pong.

In this shattered logic, the common elements are the immediacy of reaction, immediacy without digestion. This reaches caricature levels as it becomes popularized and turns into a powerful political force. To the furious, offended reaction, techniques of more offenses were responded with to increase the much-desired effect of negativity. Clowns or comedic actors on television became presidents, and political leaders became clowns and comedians on social media. Truth became what goes viral, what provokes responses and reactions, whether of indignation, mostly, or of support—especially support for the character capable of mocking and ridiculing the detested adversary.

On the other hand, current analyses of manipulation do not consider that the immediate changes of these networks operate on a psychology and sensibility of the previous era, which could predict that the effect (anger, indignation) for irrelevant reasons artificially

created by these same networks will inevitably diminish to indifference, stripping manipulators of a fundamental tool, which they will try to replace by commercializing some other constitutive weakness of the human psyche that catches a new majority off guard.

The Paradigm of Commercialization

THE HISTORY OF THE LAST CENTURY SHOWS clearly that the *commercialization* of media and the *depoliticization* of consumers were always two sides of the same coin. But depoliticization does not mean de-ideologization. The ideology of the compulsive consumer, consumer of goods and distractions, is the ideology of the micro-financial elite that dominates not only the media but politics itself. A character from Luis Goytisolo's novel *Makbara* (1980) summed it up in a commercial ad: remember that "*entrusting your decision-making power to our own hands will always be the safest way to decide for yourself*."[364]

Today, we accept as naturalized the fact that both entertainment and news programs are products of the market, a meta-human nature without ideology, like rain. Simply questioning this would provoke knee-jerk reactions. This is not to say that there shouldn't be a private sector organized to achieve economic benefits, but rather that its outcomes are not ideologically neutral—neither the distraction of entertainment programs nor the distraction of news—and it is legitimate to question whether the market should be the social and existential paradigm.

Today, the market is both the means and the end. As we saw in the first part of this book, this particular historical process did not begin with the free market but with capitalism in the 17th century. In this radical and reductive paradigm of human existence, everything must be organized according to the sacred laws of the market, with the unquestionable goal of economic profit. When an individual, a company, or a country becomes wealthy, the media and culture sanctify it, and everyone must applaud without even considering how that promoted success was achieved, whether thousands or millions of people were left in misery along the way—be it in other countries or their own—not to mention the more obvious issue of externalities, such as environmental destruction.

Although all wealthy and hegemonic societies (mistakenly called *developed*) owe their status to the brutal interventions of their governments—from tariff policies and subsidies that protected and continue to protect the wealthiest elite, to the printing of global currency without producing a single screw, to the brute force of their colonialist armies and colonizing media—their *export narrative* has always been the opposite: a nonexistent utopia called the "free market," "free competition," summarized in the hysterical cry of "*freedom! ¡libertad!*" and promoted by functional politicians, according to which state intervention (State = Taxes) is the greatest obstacle to freedom and progress toward greater wealth.[cxlii]

For free-market ideologues, any human dimension, such as solidarity or assistance to the weak, is an obstacle. Taxes, tariffs are obstacles. Public education is an obstacle, just as the education of slaves was an obstacle for slave systems first and extractivist systems later. Anything that benefits the majority of those at the bottom is an artificial intervention, a theft of effort and merit, an obstacle to development, to freedom. All policies, aid, and protections that benefit those at the top are a natural necessity of the market that will ultimately benefit those at the bottom in the long run. Always in the long run, because the most needy are those who can and must wait the most. Hunger and scarcity can wait; greed and accumulation cannot.

It wasn't always this way. Even if we limit ourselves to the 20th century, we will find many instances where the reality was the opposite. Until the 1920s, when the dominance of commercial ideology became radicalized, there was a significant presence of socialist groups and working-class individuals in Hollywood. Until World War II, there were 800 unionist newspapers with social and cultural content across the United States, read by over 20 million people (a fifth of the total population).[365] This was combated by media magnate and Nazi sympathizer William

[cxlii] At the same time that the World Trade Organization successfully demands that underdeveloped countries eliminate their subsidies, both the United States and Europe maintain strong subsidies, primarily for agriculture, allowing them to export at prices below cost. We examined this in *La frontera salvaje* (2021) in the case of Haiti in the 1990s, a country that, after a coup against Aristide and under coercion, was forced to deregulate its agricultural market, leading to the bankruptcy of small rice farmers after U.S. rice began entering the country at lower prices. The same happened with African countries in the early 21st century.

Randolph Hearst, who made it his mission to label President F. D. Roosevelt and all non-commercial media and organizations as *communist*.[cxliii]

In the United States in the 1920s, the majority of the population preferred that the new medium, radio, remain a public information service. Decades after the invention of radio in 1926, only 4.3 percent of stations were commercial.[366] Teachers' unions were in favor of maintaining a minimum number of these waves for non-commercial, more democratic distance education, but by 1928, in just two years, universities had already lost dozens of waves (from 128 to 95). The director of the University of Arkansas radio station complained that the FRC (the agency in Washington that managed radio waves) "*took away all the hours that were worth anything and left us with those that had no value*." This is not just an example; at the time, barely five percent of the U.S. population supported a radical shift toward commercialization. In 1932, *Business Week* reported a flood of letters protesting the new advertising-based broadcasting.[367]

In 1925, teachers and professors had founded the National Association of Educational Broadcasters (NAEB), and in 1930, in response to the incipient but aggressive control of the private sector through the sale of advertising, they created the National Committee on Education by Radio. By 1938, they had managed to secure five waves dedicated to education, but all observers agreed that the exposure to commercial advertising was not well received by the public. Despite this long history of resistance by nonprofit media, by the late 1930s, few waves remained dedicated to the dissemination of culture and knowledge. All had given way to commercial radio, with its entertainment programs supported by commercial advertisements.

To deliver the final blow, the new commercial stations offered free airtime to politicians and legislators. Sound familiar? Between 1931 and 1933, legislators were invited 298 times to the brand-new NBC, a network owned by General Motors, the telephone company AT&T, and the United Fruit Company, responsible for multiple coups and massacres in Latin

[cxliii] During the 1930s, the struggle between the left (and for many years President F.D. Roosevelt) in favor of unions and state intervention to regulate and organize public services like healthcare, retirement, and education clashed head-on with the billionaires who controlled big business. William Hearst, among other billionaire *businessmen*, labeled these efforts (which limited their entrepreneurial freedom) as *communist*, while lobbying for the United States not to oppose Hitler's Nazi regime. The slogan of this lobby (many of its members were decorated by Hitler) was "*America First*" (America First), later adopted by candidate and then President Donald Trump.

America. Naturally, none of the politicians invited or to be invited were in favor of demands for any kind of regulation of radio waves in favor of a percentage for non-commercial groups. At the time, groups proposing to keep some waves dedicated to public education were discredited as "unrealistic fools," even though not all of them were professors. Some of them were respected millionaires, like Frances Payne Bolton or the editor Joy Elmer Morgan, who summed it up this way: "*There has never been in the entire history of the United States an example of such colossal mismanagement and lack of vision with such far-reaching consequences as the fact of having handed over the radio channels almost exclusively to commercial hands.*" According to Morgan, the politicians and agencies tasked with regulating an already developed and mature system only sought *"the complete overthrow of the current system*" to place it in the hands of private greed.[368] At another time, Morgan stated that there was no intellectual in the country who supported this direction of reality, except those who received money from the major private networks. John Dewey, the most important philosopher, psychologist, and educator of the first half of the century, spoke out in 1934: "*Radio is the most important instrument of social education the world has known so far, and it can be used to distort facts, to misinform an entire society. I believe the dilemma between using radio in this way or, on the contrary, as a public service is the most important dilemma of our time*." The so-called "freedom of the press" is practically impossible, Dewey asserted, "*as long as it is under the control of concentrated capitalism*."[369]

At the time, criticisms in this direction from groups without special interests were dominant. On April 28, 1932, the publication *Education by Radio* argued that the principle of the Magna Carta of American radio declared that its existence was due to the "public interest" and criticized the lobbies attempting to change these principles: "*The staff of the [Federal] Radio Commission is currently recruiting lawyers and people with military and commercial interests (…) and subordinating the educational aspect to the monopoly of commercial interests.*" Later, it warned: "*Freedom of expression is the foundation of any democracy. Allowing private interests to monopolize the greatest instrument of access to the human mind ever known is to destroy democracy. Without the freedom of expression of those who do not have 'profits' as their primary interest, there will be no intelligent basis for determining any policy of social interest*."[370] Gradually, university and other educational radio stations were closed, confirming the divorce of their major institutions of education and culture from the rest of the population, a divide reflected every

two years in electoral maps and in the mutual distrust between these two sectors of a dissociated society. By the 1930s, organizations advocating for a quota of airwaves for non-commercial education, such as the NCER (part of the Institute of Education Sciences), were characterized as "*a group misled by educators*" demanding "*childish*" nonsense.[371] For his part, the "socialist" F. D. Roosevelt did not side with the groups opposing the complete takeover of the airwaves by private interests because, as a frequent guest on these broadcasts, he feared losing this political favor.

At the same time, in Canada, public discussions were held in dozens of cities to decide what was most appropriate: whether to follow the incipient commercialization of the new medium happening in the United States through advertisements or to keep the media independent of private capital. As Canadian businessman and socialist Graham Spry summarized to the American millionaire and advocate for public media, Armstrong Perry: "*Our greatest fear is not just the [commercial] monopoly but the foreign power that comes with the monopoly*."[372] The majority decision was to keep broadcasting as a public, non-commercial service.

Nevertheless, the power of accumulated capital was overwhelming. As Professor Robert McChesney observed, the same process occurred during the 1990s in the debate over the legal status of the Internet: whether to keep the new medium of communication regulated by governments or to leave it to the "laws of the market" and the interests of corporations. On June 22, 1998, The New York Times reported "*a climate in which any regulation of the Internet in its commercial infancy is considered high treason*."[373]

In 1934, the privatizing lobbies and those opposing the petition for 25 percent of channels to be non-commercial in the United States achieved their greatest success with the Communications Act. This was the governing law for media until the Telecommunications Act of 1996, not coincidentally designed to regulate the new medium, the Internet, under the new neoliberal ideology of privatizations and deregulations of "commercial freedom." Among other provisions, it eliminated the legal limit on the number of channels owned by a single financial group. This is the case with Sinclair Broadcast Group, which currently owns nearly two hundred local channels in various states (affiliated with major national networks like Fox, CBS, and NBC) that are forced to read statements from the central board as if they were real, objective, and independent information, in all cases supporting the conservative ideology of large corporations.

In the early 1930s, those fighting for a space for public, non-commercial media insisted that "*one of the distinguishing features of American democracy is the excellence of its public school system*." Wayne Soper, in his 1932 article "Radio in the Rural Schools," went further and called for an extension of the system, since "*this understanding only applies to urban schools, not rural ones*." For others ("Public Interest, Convenience, and Necessity in a Nutshell"), "*freedom of expression is the very foundation of democracy. Allowing private interests to monopolize the most powerful means of reaching the human mind is to destroy democracy* [...] "*The success of a democracy depends on an informed and enlightened citizenry, but currently, many of our voters obtain that information from a single point of view*."[374]

In 1938, years after the privatizing assault on the media, NBC concluded: "*Our media are what they are because they operate in American democracy. It is a free system because this is a free country. It is privately owned because private property is one of our national doctrines. It is maintained privately, through the commercial sponsorship of a portion of the program hours, and at no cost to the listener, because ours is a free economic system*."[375] Moreover, in a reminder of recent political narratives: "*those who attack this private system of communications attack democracy*."[376]

In England, with the BBC and with the majority support of the population, broadcasting remained, for the most part, a public, non-commercial service until a decade after World War II. From the fifties to the eighties, it remained as a mixed property between public and private capital but with clear quality control over cultural and informational content by the State. This began to change with the neoliberalism imposed by Margaret Thatcher's government in the 80s. By the 90s, the commercialization of the British public service took place in the United States to raise funds for its headquarters in England

The history of the Internet is a carbon copy of the process that radio underwent. In the mid-1920s, when radio, the revolutionary new medium of the time, had already been invented and its use was in development, a third of the airwaves were still public service, meaning educational or non-commercial. Similar to all previous communication media, the Internet was not invented by any "successful businessman" but by American professors who believed they were creating an anarchic medium, first a non-commercial network of researchers and then a network open to the public for interaction and the dissemination of ideas and information. As McChesney observes, "*The Internet would never have been*

created by any private company; not only because the waiting time for returns would have been unacceptable, but because its fundamental idea of an open architecture would have been unacceptable to private companies"[377].

A couple of decades later, when the idea and the entire structure of the Internet had already been developed based on the most democratic principle of public ownership, like all media and all great inventions before it, it was hijacked by the powers that be, which, in recent centuries, have been based on money and the concentration of capital, that is, large corporations.[cxliv] The privatization and commercialization of the Internet through various deregulatory laws occurred in the 90s, not coincidentally at the peak of the neoliberal wave. Washington decided to privatize large sectors of the network in 1993, when until then it had been prohibited and had been maintained and developed as an anarchic reality, threatening to become the property of ordinary people. The original idea of those who worked on these projects was not in favor of a government monopoly, but neither was it in favor of the oligopoly of large corporations (protected by that same government) which, in a few years, took control of this fundamental instrument of reality and public opinion creation, not entirely but to a sufficient degree to maintain control.

Even a powerful liberal (that is, conservative) publication like *The Economist* recognized this in 1998, though not without its classic class ambiguities: "*When Cyberia* [the Internet] *was a small country of academics, its laws worked very well. But now it has been colonized by the market. More action in favor of business is necessary*."[378] Power always has a good excuse to appropriate all inventions, past and future.

In this case, the decision to privatize the Internet was made many years earlier, in 1990, at a meeting at Harvard University, attended by representatives of the Washington government and major telecommunications corporations. Of course, there wasn't even a professor from other fields, such as the humanities, for example; even less was there a representative of the people, neither American nor from any other nation. Democracy is always an obstacle to progress and freedom, isn't it? "*It's true, the government created the Internet with its resources, but the boy has grown up and left home*," was the explanation of one of the members of the Internet

[cxliv] Karl Marx had already observed the same process and the same logic: "*the profits of the most productive machinery, and on a larger scale, were concentrated in the hands of a smaller number of capitalists*". *Capital: a critical analysis of capitalist production*. New York: Humboldt pub., 1890, p. 267.

Society (ISOC), interested in its privatization.[379] Not for any other reason, in 1996 the most important media law since 1934 was passed, the Telecommunications Act, which unleashed the forces of large lobbies and corporations in the name of democratic participation by all private actors. Thanks to this law, a single corporation was no longer limited in the number of media outlets it was authorized to operate. The freedom of liberals and, more recently, conservative libertarians, the freedom of the powerful, the freedom of the owners of countries. Long live freedom.

Since the commercialization of the Internet, people did not abandon radio or television but added a new medium, adding several hours a day to the attention market. Just as with the popularization of newspapers in the 19th century, the new medium promised to democratize information and create freer societies and individuals. Just as with all new communication media, with the internet and social networks, this freedom has been heavily questioned. Just as in all previous cases, the powers of the ruling elites hijacked the new media and technologies from day one, and in no case was it with the altruistic purpose of ceding power to the overwhelming majority of those at the bottom, the (seemingly) powerless. This urgency was even more critical in those countries that had consolidated a system of liberal democracy with periodic elections. In this way, the media justified the ends, and public opinion became the *commodity* and the most valuable weapon.

In October 2022, the richest man on the planet, Elon Musk, bought Twitter for $44 billion, and before even meeting the company's top executives, he promised to fire half of the employees to "clean house." Wage earners are always trash to the psychopaths who love success and the exercise of power by firing employees.[cxlv] By November, he had already fulfilled his promise and, in the name of freedom, proposed various service fees, in addition to starting to include advertising. On Twitter, freedom began to express itself with an explosion of racism and political violence. The platform did not improve, but Mr. Musk continued to make billions of dollars. From a board of directors, it turned into a dictatorship more

[cxlv] It is a psychological trait shared by famous figures like former presidents Trump and Macri, and by thousands of "successful class B businessmen." In June 2018, Luis Malvido, the new manager of Aerolíneas Argentinas, gave a talk boasting about all the people he had fired in other companies in other countries. He compared it to the habit of the victorious lion that kills the cubs of the old lion to secure its power.

akin to a *banana republic* with a psychopathic leader, self-promoted as the champion of freedom and democracy.

The introduction of advertising on Twitter is the repetition of the commercialization process of a communication medium, exactly as happened with radio in the 1930s, with television later, and with telecommunications companies, and primarily with the internet in the 1990s. Politicians, presidents, and top executives sold commercialization as a way to expand freedom and ideological neutrality, as if big business and the culture of corporate and billionaire worship were not sustained by a permanent and ubiquitous ideological bombardment that is accepted as if it were the rain that gives life to the fields. The advertisers that truly matter in this logic are the big companies, not the small businesses. Moreover, in peripheral countries (the majority of the world), even the big companies have little chance of paying for advertising on platforms on the scale that companies from dominant countries do.

The hyper-commercialization of societies has created a culture of consumption and, with it, the fossilization of the ideology that deifies the laws of the market over all human activity, defines success (the millionaires), and demonizes any alternative under some fictional figure (the lazy workers or the child-eating socialists). There is no consumption without profits, and there is no concentration of profits without a consumerism that prevents any *radical thought* that opposes a *radical reality*.

The comparison of the hamburger and book industries relates to what we detailed in the early chapters: the market exploits ancestral weaknesses, such as the neural reward for sugar and fat (Coca-Cola and Big Mac), in the same way that our brain easily connects with a violent incident, whether it's an accident, a bar fight, or a war conflict. In this sense, the hyper-commercialization of the latest stage of history continues and radicalizes this trend. The growing fascist violence in "developed countries" (basically due to their loss of control and wealth extraction power from Third World countries and their increasing inability to export violence in neocolonial wars that unite and disguise their internal contradictions) has been reinforced by the market for media violence. By the end of the 20th century, the consumption of violent programs and images aimed at children between one year old and preadolescence on American television had increased significantly, even though the Cold War had ended nearly a decade earlier. At the same time, that same market created an army of compulsive teenage buyers. By 1997, 80 percent of girls aged 13 to

17 admitted that they "*loved shopping*" while making 40 percent more trips to shopping malls than the rest of the population. A year later, at a high school in Georgia, an event sponsored by Coca-Cola was organized. A student, with the rebelliousness typical of her age and, above all, of her historical moment hijacked by consumption and mega-corporations, decided to wear a T-shirt with the Pepsi-Cola logo. She was suspended by the school authorities.[380] This, which may seem absurd to an outsider, was confirmed by the market's preachers, who since then have not only aimed to privatize social security and other services but also the remaining education that is still in the hands of the state. The conservative politician, lobbyist, and director of the Christian Coalition of America (CCA), Ralph Reed, confidently stated: "*We need a revolution in education, the same one we had in television and telecommunications*."[381] The attention business understood perfectly that it was easier to capture new consumers and ensure massive ideological conditioning by replacing education with entertainment.

In the essay "There are Alternatives" published in 1998, philosopher Jürgen Habermas was categorical: "*I don't think we can have any illusions about the public sphere in a society where commercial media set the tone*."[382] Of course, as NBC and corporate lobbies said in the 1930s, all these non-commercial opinions are *unrealistic*, *childish*, and against *freedom* and *democracy*. After all, Habermas, like Professor Einstein or the pioneer of modern computing, Alan Turing, and the philosophers or inventors of recent centuries have all been poor, unrealistic, and failures.

Today, in the United States, there is a public television network, PBS, and a radio network, NPR. Until the presidency of Ronald Reagan, most of their funding came from the federal government, which gradually decreased in the following decades to a meager 15 percent, in a persistent effort to turn them, if not into private entities, at least into commercial networks. Despite being the largest producers of professional cultural and informational content in the country, every year they must beg for donations from their audience to supplement their dwindling budget, always under attack from conservative politicians and the corporations that fund them, who understand that the existence of a media outlet depends on its *ratings*. On the other hand, as Robert McChesney observed, "*the last thing commercial networks want is for PBS and NPR to compete for advertising, especially among that educated and upper-middle-class audience. When in 1998 the*

French government limited advertising time on public television, TF1, the country's largest commercial network, suddenly found itself benefiting."[383]

In 1998, Leslie Moonves, president of CBS Television, admitted to the press that the network's decision to reduce its program lineup to those that wouldn't offend advertisers was something "*completely common*." That same year, journalists Jane Akre and Steve Wilson from News Corp. TV in Florida, owned by media mogul Rupert Murdoch, were fired for working on an investigation into Monsanto's practices. One of the network's executives, without hesitation, explained the logic behind the decision: "*We paid three billion dollars for those TV stations. We are the ones who will decide what is news and what isn't. News is what we decide is news*."[384] This is no exception. Giant corporations like Procter & Gamble, for example, have agencies that monitor all the TV programs where they advertise their shampoos, toothpastes, detergents, chips, and sodas, to avoid airing ads on programs with overly critical content. By 2020, the company was generating 75 billion dollars in revenue, marketing hundreds of brands to billions of consumers in 140 countries.

The defeat of those groups that advocated for retaining at least a portion of the new media for education and non-commercialized culture not only lost their battle in the era of radio (in the 1930s) and in the era of another innovation created and developed with public money and by non-commercial universities, the internet (similarly privatized in the 1990s), but, as if that weren't enough, these same mega media conglomerates penetrated universities down to the schools of journalism, under the assumption that "they know reality," as if "reality" were part of an external nature and not a creation of that very market, of that very business ideology. An ideology that also penetrated other sectors, faculties, and schools of universities, turning them into suppliers of tailor-made, obedient employees, transforming students into clients and consumers into hungry sheep—with all due respect to those noble and sensitive little animals that are also sacrificed by the millions each year.

Attention business, strategy of distraction

ON MARCH 19, 1937, CHARLES GUSTAV BINDERUP, representative of Nebraska and member of the Democratic majority, quoted Henry Ford in Congress, who had allegedly said these words in the halls of that same building three years prior: "*It is well that the people of the nation do not understand our banking and monetary system; if they did, there would be a revolution before tomorrow morning*."[385] A similar idea had already been formulated by the father of modern propaganda, Edward Bernays: keeping the population unaware of how power works is the best way to manage a democracy.

But ignorance is not enough, as it is something that ends with a bit of education or, at least, with the necessary information. For these cases, there are two other well-known tools: (1) creating a state of faith and denial in the face of any evidence and (2) keeping the population busy and entertained, at least a necessary and sufficient majority. This second point is part of the life of a worker who is kept in a state of need, on the edge between subsistence and debt or poverty. The busy worker (in production or not; most jobs are not productive) comes home exhausted, doesn't want to deal with more *pre*-occupations, and turns to the natural search for relaxation through entertainment. Social media and the digital world have taken this habit to the extreme with the hyper-fragmentation of anecdotes, where a person can watch micro-videos of ten seconds for hours that lead to nothing more than intellectual intoxication. These consumers are not intellectually denied, not at all; they are addicts, flies in the web who once had the ability to fly.

In 1910, six of the richest men in the world secretly gathered for nine days on Jekyll Island off the coast of Georgia to create a central bank now known as the Federal Reserve. One of the members, the president of the National City Bank of New York (now Citibank) Frank A. Vanderlip, explained the mystery: "*I was as secretive as any conspirator. We knew that no one should discover us, or else all the time and effort invested would have been wasted. If it had been discovered that our group had met and drafted a banking bill, that bill would have had no chance of being passed by Congress*."[386]

A century later, as summarized by Professor Robert McChesney, while the new trade agreement was being cooked up, "*for every American who was informed about the TPP, there were tens of thousands who hadn't even*

heard of it but had participated in the debate over whether Kim Kardashian had gotten a butt implant."[387] That's how distraction works. It's not new, but few care.

The globalized self is aware of its insignificance. While its attention span is reduced to that of a goldfish (eight seconds on average), it needs to be the center of attention of the other fish. At least for a few seconds. It knows it's possible. After all, it possesses the same communication and promotion tools as its admired gods. It knows it's not one of them, but it doesn't give up the thrill of being one for eight seconds. It only aspires to a divine touch, a fleeting mystical moment when its idol deigns to leave it a *like*. In other words, addiction has a religious component that platform engineers like Twitter know as '*positive reinforcement*." That is, trying something a thousand times until the desired response is obtained (until not long ago, not a few teenagers reached the limit of a thousand tweets a day; now they've moved their fragmented existences to Discord or TikTok): "*The best 'reinforcement program' is what's called an 'intermittent program*." In a laboratory experiment, "*a rat pushes a lever, for which it receives a reward, but not in a predictable manner. Many times, the rat pushes the lever and nothing comes out, but occasionally, it receives a big prize. So the rat keeps pressing and pressing and pressing, even though it doesn't achieve the expected result. It does this because, every now and then, it gets some satisfaction*."[388]

The media cannot create public opinion overnight, but they can choose the topic of national debate. Choosing the topic, the concern, the danger is deciding where to tilt public opinion. The major media are very effective at capturing the attention of the masses, that is, amplifying the scale of an event or reducing it to nonexistence. It has always been this way, since the Middle Ages and, surely, since the Paleolithic era. The most effective way to direct the focus of popular attention is to distract it, to remove it from where it is not convenient to focus, such as the legitimacy of the power of the feudal lord, the Pope, or the reformer, the power of banks or the emperor, of an ethnicity, a gender, or a social class… In any case, the power of money and weapons.

In the United States, after the Civil War, it was enough to point out the "problem of the blacks" to benefit the party of the whites, first represented by the Democratic Party and later by the Republican Party. The great debate about American imperialism, brought to the table by intellectuals like Mark Twain, was also resolved with a new theory that

warned white Europeans and Americans that they would be replaced or exterminated by the dangerous blacks in the tropics and the hybrids in the banana republics of Latin America.[cxlvi]

In the 1920s, after the Russian Revolution, the topic thrown like a dead body in an Agatha Christie novel was socialism, which unleashed the first paranoia called "the Red Scare" and an anti-immigrant sentiment against the poor from Southern and Eastern European countries. The dark-skinned poor were not even considered. It didn't work with Franklin D. Roosevelt, due to the catastrophic situation of the country during the Great Depression, but it became the first obsession after the Soviets stopped being allies in World War II and became the only excuse to continue doing the same thing that corporations had been doing since the 19th century in Latin America and the Pacific. By the end of the Cold War, the new dead dog was "the Islamic threat," with the exception of Latin America: since Muslims in that region are a small, integrated minority with no lobbying power in governments, it was preferred to continue with the Cold War narrative, inoculated from the first year by the CIA.

As soon as the Berlin Wall fell, the two most promoted books in a media-driven and dogmatic manner were two strategic monstrosities: *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), by Francis Fukuyama (a plea in favor of neoliberalism) and *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996), by Samuel Huntington (a plea in favor of new wars in non-aligned oil-rich countries). The electoral debates from 1998 to 2016 were, essentially, a competition over which candidate would be macho enough to rain missiles on every dangerous country that "threatened our national security" and who would send more young soldiers to die "to fight for our freedom." For those same elections, another dead dog familiar to the nationalists who had dedicated themselves to intervening in the genocidal wars in Central America became the center of the debate. Once again, power does not need nor can it create opinion directly; it does so by pointing out what the urgent and existential issue is. A march of a few thousand poor Central American workers and displaced people was labeled an invasion, and its men as potential rapists of daughters and wives, exactly the same accusation that Southern Slavists repeated in the early and late 19th century as justification for keeping blacks under the pedagogical

[cxlvi] On this topic, see *La frontera salvaje. 200 años de fanatismo anglosajón en América Latina* (2021) in chapters like "1893. Democracy, an Instrument of White Race Domination."

state of slavery. Like the slaves in the 19th century, immigrants in the 21st century are the ideal scapegoat: they don't vote. In the 20th century, the communists, and in the 21st century, the Muslims, are not a powerful minority, neither electorally nor economically.

But, as we anticipated in previous chapters, it is not possible to create public opinion overnight in a world populated by critics and rebels, so (1) an *Attention Market* (whose greatest and most paradoxical resource has always been *distraction*) was created for quick actions and (2) an *Education Market* (especially by investing in a distorted history of countries and empires) as a more solid and long-term support. In the United States alone, commercial advertising is one of the largest sectors of the economy. In 2021, digital advertising consumed (or generated, depending on the interested party) 300 billion dollars (more than seven times the economy of Alaska or 42 percent of all global advertising spending) and is expected to surpass the entire economy of Argentina by 2030.[389] In other words, the advertising (propaganda) economy has grown much faster than the U.S. GDP since 2001. Not all of it is invested in selling bottled water, and even when promoting so many water brands, it is not done in an ideologically neutral way. I'm not just referring to the destruction of the planet, which is almost a footnote.

Between 1994 and 2003, five million people died in the African World War, centered in Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda. The rest of the world barely noticed. In 2010, it was announced that Qatar, the richest country per capita in the world, would host the 2022 FIFA World Cup. As with other World Cups, the selection was tainted by FIFA corruption. From 2010 to 2020, at least 6,750 poor migrant workers died in the construction projects needed to prepare for the grand event. On January 7, 2015, 17 people were killed in Paris by two Muslim extremists of French nationality. On January 11, sixty leaders from the developed world and their satellites flew to France to march hand in hand to the Place de la Nation against the barbarism of the other. Days before the attack, between January 3 and 7, two thousand people had been massacred in Nigeria by Boko Haram. Between 2017 and 2018, tens of thousands of young people died in Yemen under the bombs of Saudi Arabia, a dictatorship allied with Europe and the United States for generations. The bombs that fell on rebel territory were built and sold by the United States.

During the same period, U.S. media were preoccupied with the Las Vegas massacre, the Orlando massacre, the conviction of actor Bill

Cosby for sexual abuse decades earlier, the confirmation of Judge Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court (accused, to no effect, of a sexual assault in his youth), the allegations by Stormy Daniels, and the details about President Trump's penis, which, according to the VIP escort, was something strange, short, and with a head like a mushroom.

In no case did the captive attention, the consumption of novelty, produce any change or popular mobilization but exactly the opposite. Anesthesia. Once again, the rest of the world barely noticed the tragedies in Africa and the Middle East and, almost unanimously, forgot all the incidents. The goal is consumption, whether of food, goods, or urgent and morbid news. As has been the case for centuries, non-European ethnicities do not feel, do not hurt, do not matter, do not make news. In 1899, General Frederick Funston tortured and raped Filipino women at will before explaining the facts: "*there are those in our country who question the ethics of this war… They do not know that the Filipinos are actually illiterate, semi-savages fighting a war against Anglo-Saxon order and decency*." In a letter sent to his family in New Jersey, soldier Kingston wrote: "*we kill men, women, and children… I feel in glory when I see my gun aimed at a black man and I shoot him*." On Thursday, July 20, the soldier and correspondent for the *New York Evening Post* in the Philippines, H. L. Wells, confirmed it: "so far, no one has questioned the fact that our soldiers in the Philippines shoot blacks *for sport… But the American people can rest assured that there have been no more Filipino deaths than necessary; at least no more than the British considered necessary to kill in India and Sudan; no more than the French killed in Annam [Vietnam*]." America would only kill 200,000 Filipinos in a few years. Seventy years later, U.S. General William Childs Westmoreland, hero of the Vietnam massacres, stated that "Asians do not understand the value of life. Over there, life is cheap, that's part of Eastern philosophy, and besides, there are so many of them."390

For millennia, every viral story must have three necessary and sufficient elements: (1) *villains*, (2) *victims*, and (3) *heroes*. The distribution of roles depends on the hegemonic power of the moment. The others (the humans of other races over there and other political ideas here) are the threat. The enemies. When they are their victims, they don't hurt. When they are not our victims, they don't exist. Our dead are real because they hurt. If it doesn't move us, it doesn't matter. If it doesn't matter, it doesn't sell. But even what matters and sells has its limits, its rules, and its conditions. No one is better than the mercenaries of the market at studying and

exploiting these ancient rules, as McDonald's has exploited the desire (not the need) for fat and sugar without limits.

Just over a century ago, to sell the First World War in the United States, the publicist George Creel created a squad of hundreds of "*four minute men*," after calculating that the average consumer's attention span didn't last more than four minutes. Since then, the consumption of information through new media like radio, film, and television, through advertising and propaganda, created what we might call (without linking it to the medical condition defined with the same terminology) individuals with attention deficit. In 2015, a study based on electroencephalograms (EEGs) by Microsoft Corp. concluded that people continue to lose their ability to concentrate. By that year, the average attention span had dropped to *eight seconds*. In the year 2000, the average sustained attention span of a consumer was 12 seconds. According to scientists, a goldfish has an attention span of nine seconds, one second more than the average social media user.[391]

Now, "attention span" and "captivity" are two different things. Different, but complementary. A hyper-fragmented attention span is more susceptible to digital captivity because it requires immediate satisfaction. It's the world of video games. A player becomes addicted when they need one atom of reward after another. An attention span capable of immersing itself in a two-hundred-page book has a more holistic goal of understanding a problem or situation. Hyper-fragmented attention is an endless, aimless succession. In fact, the rage attacks of gamers when they lose a game are likely more due to the interruption of the stimulus-reward-immediate process than to the defeat itself, since it's a virtual defeat, meaning it's nothing. Memes, TikTok micro-videos, or endless compilations of fragmented situations where you can't even see the end or resolution of the situation, let alone have a second of reflection or digestion of what happened in the previous fragment before being exposed to the new micro-situation—which, naturally, has zero connection to the previous one—are no different.

None of this is part of nature, sunspots, or quantum physics. Social media labs like Twitter employ engineer-psychologists who dedicate all their time to imagining and implementing ways to keep their consumers captive, and to make that captivity longer and longer, which is exactly the opposite of the consumer-victim's ability to concentrate.

Aza Raskin, former employee of Mozilla and Jawbone, put it graphically: "*It's like they're sprinkling cocaine all over the web to make users come back again and again for the same drug […] Behind every phone screen, there are a thousand engineers working to make the use of a platform as addictive as possible*."

According to Sandy Parakilas, former Facebook employee, "*social media is very similar to a slot machine […] there was definitely awareness that the product was habit-forming and addictive*." When she herself tried to stop using the platform, she felt like she was fighting a tobacco addiction. Naturally, Facebook's version (like the past excuses of tobacco companies that denied or downplayed lung cancer deaths) consisted of another cliché that, like all clichés, has a grain of truth used as a smokescreen: their products were designed "to bring people closer to their friends, family, and the things that matter to them." Leah Pearlman, one of the inventors of Facebook's *Like* button, later admitted that she had become hooked on Facebook because she had started basing her sense of self-esteem on the number of "likes" she got with each interaction.[392]

For his part, Sean Parker, founding president of Facebook, stated that social media "*changes an individual's relationship with society*" and interferes with productivity in strange ways. "*Only God knows what it's doing to our children's brains*," he added during a seminar on the topic in Philadelphia. It's no coincidence that the gods of Silicon Valley send their children to schools with almost no technology, aside from chalkboards to write on. Even Bill Gates didn't allow his children to have a cell phone until they were 14.[393] Tim Cook, CEO of Apple, also admitted that he imposes the same limits on his nephew. "*There are some things I won't allow. I don't want them on social media*."[394]

But social media is part of a larger and older reality: the ideology of profits-above-all. The children at the bottom belong to another human species. They are products. They are consumers. Like 19th-century slaves, like fighting bulls, they don't feel pain or have civilized emotions. McDonald's, for example, indoctrinates children from the moment they leave their mothers' breasts with the propaganda of the "HAPPY MEAL," more demagogic than any politician and as indoctrinating as any religion.[cxlvii]

[cxlvii] "The Happy Meal" was an idea of the Chilean-Guatemalan businesswoman and philanthropist Yolanda Fernández de Cofiño, a graduate of Hamburger University in Illinois. With the sole purpose of creating McDonald's leaders, Hamburger University has campuses on several continents and is more exclusive than Harvard University.

None of this indoctrination is called "child abuse," even though the victims are children as young as five or ten. According to the director of Fox Family Channel, until 2001 a subsidiary of Freedom Channel (The Channel of Liberty) and part of the media conglomerate of the giant Disney, "*more and more, companies are realizing that if they build loyalty in children today, they will be the adults of tomorrow.*" A marketing specialist had already observed: "*If you have children, I can assure you that when you get home, you'll ask them what they want to eat or what they'd like you to buy them. Parents don't want to buy anything their children don't like. They don't want to hear them complaining. It's not efficient*."[395] By that time (1997), children between four and ten years old were responsible for a market of 24 billion dollars (43 billion at 2022 value), three times larger than a decade earlier.

In 2016, candidate Donald Trump didn't win the U.S. presidential election (or rather, the electoral college vote) because the press spoke well of him, but because they spoke *a lot* about him. Quantity over quality, like junk food. Most major media outlets, from The New York Times to CNN, didn't tire of publishing news, analyses, and reports on the endless material for outrage provided by the most ridiculous candidate in history, after James Polk in 1844. The topics tapped into the basest instincts, typical of the social media the candidate used even half-asleep late at night: racism, sexism, tribalism, xenophobia, and all kinds of toxic and negative themes, elements of our deepest ancestral reflexes. His opponent, Hillary Clinton, received more favorable coverage from the traditional mainstream press, and her campaign even spent more money (768 million) than her rival (398 million). However, as demonstrated by the media data analysis firm MediaQuant, from July 2015 to October 2016, Donald Trump's presidential campaign received 5.9 billion dollars in free attention from this same press, while Clinton received just 2.8 billion.

The business of prejudice: sex, racism, and a lot of anger

IN THE UNITED STATES, VARIOUS GROUPS of female athletes (from soccer to tennis) have fought for equal pay with their male counterparts since the 1970s.[396] According to the market empire that governs not only the economies of countries but also their ways of thinking and feeling, the

difference would be justified by the law of supply and demand. The same law that until not long ago justified women paying more for health insurance than men because they required certain specific care related to their reproductive system. To a large extent, this is still the case.[397] They need more services, so they should pay more. But accepting that societies and human existence are entirely organized under the laws of the market is, at the very least, questionable and arbitrary.

In 2022, U.S. women's soccer players achieved a resounding victory in a lawsuit for equal pay, resulting in a settlement of 24 million dollars and a commitment from the soccer federation to equalize the salaries of the men's and women's national teams.[398]The reasonable basis for these claims has been labeled or dismissed as *feminist*. Now, as is well known, machismo as a culture and patriarchy as a system do not depend solely on men but on women as well. In this sense, some groups of female athletes have managed to commercialize their underpaid fame in sports through activities on social media, which in some cases provided them with millions of dollars in income. How? By exploiting their own exploitation and, in the process, perpetuating the tyranny of patriarchy. A system always pays its defenders very well, and no defender of slavery is more effective than a few privileged slaves. The athletes who became millionaires on social media exploited the ancient and commercial principle of what a *New York Times* report subtitled, "*Sex Sells*."[399] On one hand, we have the just demands for equality, and on the other, the triumph of market rules that favor the sexual objectification of women. This is the case of Olivia Dunne, a gymnast on the Louisiana State women's team, who is on her way to earning two million dollars through her sensual poses on her Instagram and TikTok accounts. The same goes for gymnasts Sunisa Lee and Paige Bueckers or basketball players like the Cavinder twins, along with a dozen other cases. The commercialization of one's own image skyrocketed when laws stopped limiting its use to the universities for which the athletes compete.

On one hand, the laws address an issue of individual justice, and on the other, they consolidate an ideology—that of the market—and a culture—that of machismo, which objectifies young women and confirms the commercialization of human existence and the exploitation of the market of our ancestral instincts, in this case, the sex of the other.

The internet in general and social media in particular base their business on human base instincts. The big market knows it has more to

gain from base instincts (fear, anger, sex, revenge) than from elevated feelings (love, justice, solidarity). The market of fear, for example, is one of the most lucrative. Fear of an external attack (Muslims, poor immigrants, aliens), fear of identity theft, fear of losing one's job, fear of the opponent winning the presidential election, fear of an economic crisis, fear of those below, fear of internet viruses, fear of hugging, fear of looking the other in the eye… Although stability is one of the conditions of a developed society (the word *credit* comes from *creo, to believe* in the other), instability and uncertainty are engines of the capitalist system. If a worker did not fear losing their job and, with it, in a domino effect, their health insurance, their home, and their family, they would not work like a slave; they would not be so docile and would say what they really think about their boss and the system. The fear industry dominates a large part of the market, and its products are all classified as *insurance*: health insurance, accident insurance, fire insurance, life insurance. If it weren't for the armies of digital virus programmers, the powerful antivirus industries would not be so powerful. If it weren't for the fear of crime and urban insecurity, the police and the repressive apparatus of the state would not be so important. If it weren't for the fear of those below, those above would not consolidate their vampirization of the middle class.

Any character who succeeds on social media, whether a politician, a journalist, or an "*influencer*," must have something or a lot of negativity; something or a lot of ridiculousness in their personality or character; something that exasperates everyone around and within their sphere of influence. The psychological mechanism of the post-capitalist consumer is not very sophisticated:

1. *A statement without rational, statistical, or historical basis provokes the indignation of the circumstantial reader.*

2. *Like a fly caught in a spider's web, the sensible reader reacts by trying to refute the absurdity with various responses that follow the counterarguments, if not insults.*

3. *The followers of the ridiculous character admire them for their ability to infuriate their adversaries, who are the dialectical adversaries of their followers. The troll, whether real or unintentional, becomes their own character fueled by the reactions they receive.*

4. As Joseph Goebbels himself defined it, "*propaganda must redirect aggression by specifying the targets of hatred*."[400]

In this way, what for the ridiculous characters themselves were unthoughtful statements, become signs and proof of success: the effective mockery of a superior being. This explains why moderately intelligent people admire or, at the very least, consume the limitless output of people with psychological issues, like Nikocado Avocado, people with serious intellectual problems, *influencers* from YouTube and TikTok, or plainly toxic and contentless characters, like frequently inexplicable popular politicians. Thus, the flies, which possess the ability to fly and see with thousands of eyes, end up in excrement or in the spider's web, where they are slowly sucked dry by the eight-legged weaver.

In 2014, a study conducted by professors at Beihang University in Beijing on 200,000 users of the Weibo platform (similar to Twitter, with over 500 million users), concluded that messages containing anger traveled faster, reached further, and had a much greater influence than other emotions like joy.[401] In 2015, another team of scientists, with Facebook's authorization, manipulated the news that 700,000 users were exposed to for a week. One group of users was exposed to negative news and the other to positive news. It doesn't take a genius to predict the result. The first group showed greater changes in their mood. This simple experiment alone should set off alarms for psychologists and educators, but it also makes those who understand that personal interest and profit are the interest and profit of the rest of society rub their hands with glee.

Indignation is not bad, quite the opposite, but when it becomes a tool of power manipulation (in this case, the power of business) then it is not only bad but perverse and immoral.

It is not an irony but an understandable consequence that multiple studies indicate links between excessive use of social media and depression, loneliness, and a range of other psychological issues. In Britain, for example, teenagers spend an average of 18 hours a week on their phones, largely using social media. Another study links social media use over a four-year period to an increase in depression among middle and high school students.[402] Other studies find that limiting teenagers to just 30 minutes of social media shows an improvement in levels of loneliness and depression after several weeks.[403]

In November 2017, the creator of Napster, the first investor and founding president of Facebook, Sean Parker, said that his massive social network exploited "*a vulnerability in human psychology to attract and retain users' attention*." The goal is "*how to consume as much of the user's time as*

possible by capturing their attention," which "*means we need to provide them with a little dopamine every so often, whether because someone liked or commented on one of their photos, one of their posts, or whatever*."[404] This artificial dopamine, like cocaine and like any other drug, inevitably leads to depression and dependence. This is not a prediction or a conjecture but a fact revealed by various studies on the effects of social media. Parker, like all billionaires with some semblance of conscience, is a well-known philanthropist.

Jean Twenge, a psychology professor at San Diego State University, stated in 2021 that "*the evidence showing a clear link between social media use and depression is quite definitive at this point. The most comprehensive and well-conducted studies we have show that teenagers who spend more time on social media are more likely to be depressed or unhappy*."[405] When in March of that same year, Florida Democratic Representative Kathy Castor, during the Congressional questioning of Facebook owner Mark Zuckerberg, asked if he was familiar with a 2019 study that found the risk of depression in children increases with each daily hour spent on social media, Zuckerberg simply replied that he was not.

Despite the psychological and even ancestral dimensions we can trace in social and post-social behaviors, there are notable cultural differences. It is no academic secret, for example, that regions like the Americas are the most unequal in the world, and not coincidentally, the most violent. In regions with population densities several times higher, such as in Asia, contrary to Western perceptions, fears, and stereotypes, crime rates are relatively very low. Beyond the obscene social inequalities of the American continent, and especially Latin America, there are cultural differences—without delving into the discussion of the genetic and historical makeup shaped by waves of conquerors and immigrants who populated it.

But it has been this world, particularly the values of Anglo-Saxon America, that, since the mid-19th century, has exported and disseminated its own culture as the correct way of doing things, as the standard for judging beauty, goodness, and justice.

A study in Canada analyzing 40 million tweets (excluding bots) found that Canadians tend to use more positive words than Americans. Canadian tweets were filled with words like "great," "amazing," "awesome," and "thank you," while Americans preferred expressions like "hate," "weird," "boring," "tired." A related hypothesis suggests that these

words do not reflect mood but rather the way one chooses to speak.[406] A hypothesis aside from the concrete data. "*In the United States, for example, most people claim they like to feel excited, happy, and positive. However, research has found that social media users in that country are more influenced by posts expressing anger, rage, and other negative emotions*."[407] Neither the philosophy of Ubuntu nor the pursuit of balance or the peace of Nirvana lies at the heart of Anglo-Saxon anxiety. It is no coincidence that their tribes leaped from their islands and tiny fiefdoms to subjugate the world through fanaticism and cannon fire, which they called freedom and democracy.

Not only are business and consumer culture composed of one part rational ideas and nine parts pure emotion (fears and desires), but so is politics. Or rather, electoral politics, since grand politics is part of the business of those in power in big business, which thrives on investments (donations) and concrete returns (laws written by the same donors) and is rarely contested in a simple national election.[cxlviii]

When it comes to the nature of social media, the emotion of "electoral politics" and dialectical battles is the only factor capable of turning anything, no matter what, into a viral phenomenon. The viral phenomenon is provoked and produces dialectical fever and its consequences: anger, reaction, hatred, and other sticky threads where flies become more and more entangled, awaiting their savior.

Trolls—amateurs, professionals, and mercenaries

IN 1987, AT 19 YEARS OLD, I had to move to the capital of Uruguay, Montevideo, to continue what was then called "Scientific Orientation," which, in turn, led to engineering or architecture. Like any shy small-town kid (in my case, pathologically shy) arriving in the big city, I met interesting people and others who, fortunately, have faded from my horizon.

[cxlviii] Although not a new idea, in 2018 USA Today and the Center for Public Integrity published an interesting series of data demonstrating the practice of large corporations writing the laws that legislators propose and approve. One of those reports is titled, for example, "*Copy, paste, legislate. How Laws Are Written by Corporations and Interest Groups, Explained Visually*", April 2019.

One of them was a student (I'll call him Martin, to avoid discomfort now that he's a respectable family man and successful businessman) who lived in the richest neighborhood of the city and enjoyed recounting his adventures. He would often enter one of the intellectual cafés that no longer exist, listen for a while to a conversation of those horrible people corrupted by books, and at some point, interrupt them with an absurd argument. Martin enjoyed proving to himself how clever he was by setting fire to what he called the "Nest of Failed Leftists." In the United States, it took me years to fully understand the meaning of the word *loser* (loser) as an insult. Were Socrates, Jesus, Artigas, Bolívar, Guevara not losers? They were losers, but not failures. Even though he had little idea what each discussion was about, Martin had the ability to dismantle them like a fly injecting its eggs into a wounded animal. What struck me most was that he didn't even believe what he was saying. All he cared about was disrupting the discussion, injecting it with clichés, and provoking the anger of his better-informed adversaries until the discussion was reduced to rubble or half its participants.

When the great neoliberal crisis hit in 2002, the poor professionals left the country. Ironically, those of us who, being children of workers, didn't speak English, ended up working in Europe or other English-speaking countries. In my case, teaching in English. Martin, who spoke English like a native because he had received private, bilingual education since childhood, stayed in the comfort of his Creole influence network.

In the United States, I understood the meaning of the word "loser" as an insult. I also understood it when, in the Argentine film *The Official Story*, the military protagonist, during a Sunday family lunch, calls his father and dissident brother *losers*. But I also understood the meaning of Martin's addiction, the upper-class boy from Uruguay. Martin was a *troll* long before the popularization of the internet. That word didn't even exist in the world of mortals, except among the U.S. Marines who bombed Vietnam two decades earlier. Like everything, or almost everything, the novelty had been invented much earlier by the hegemonic power, something I learned studying declassified CIA documents, for example. Even the pot-banging protests and the phrase "conspiracy theories" were introduced to Latin America by CIA agents, with a reasoned and calculated intent. A calculation that didn't always work out perfectly, because the pot-banging was adopted by the dissident left, the very groups they wanted to

demonize, and the phrase "conspiracy theory" diversified beyond their objectives. We'll see this in another chapter.

The McDonnell Douglas F-4 Phantom jets used to fly over the villages of North Vietnam ("*trolling for MiGs*") until some inexperienced Vietnamese pilot decided to step into the ring to defend the village. At that moment, the most modern and powerful U.S. aviation would locate its target and unleash its military diarrhea on villages populated by the inhuman.

This old strategy has been institutionalized on the internet and social media. Except for the means, the objectives haven't changed much. One of the most well-known bot and troll factories in the Western world has nothing to do with the CIA or the NSA but, naturally, with Russia: The Olguino Factory or The Olguino Trolls. The Russian equivalent of Twitter, VK or Vkontakte, is a social network owned by private Russian and Israeli entities, banned in Ukraine in 2017. According to one of the academic studies on troll factories and computational propaganda by Mariia Zhdanova and Darya Orlava, "*two-thirds of the television channels in Ukraine are in the hands of oligarchs*."[408] VK is equally permissive with the creation of bots, but the difference is in scale: VK's monthly active user reach is 80 million, while Twitter's is 450 million. On Facebook, bots are harder to create and therefore more expensive, but Twitter remains the political platform par excellence.

Like Martin, it's not hard to be a troll or buy thousands of bots. Like Martin, you just need free time or enough money to beat the competition.

Bots: racism, classism, and class struggle

IN 1997, WORKING IN MOZAMBIQUE as a recently graduated architect, I visited the villages of Cabo Delgado, Mueda, and Montepuez with the German Reinhard Klingler (a volunteer for an NGO called UFUNDA). In one of them, we met with the village chiefs to propose the plan that, according to Reinhard, was to be funded by a European Union cooperation group. I had been tasked with providing the architectural solutions for the vocational schools based on the available materials and labor in the area. One evening, after one of these meetings in a solemn, freshly swept red dirt

courtyard, the village chiefs approached me and said, in Portuguese full of Makua words (I quote from memory without claiming literal accuracy): "*We are very much in agreement with all your proposals… But we want the person in charge of the project to be a white man* (*ncunña* or *kunha*)." Perhaps they noticed my surprised expression, or maybe I should have responded with a question. "*Yes, ncuña… white*." What I remember without a doubt was the explanation they gave me: "*It's because white people are less corrupt than Black people*." I don't recall if I answered them or if the response was just one of the thousands of notes I took for my book *Critique of Pure Passion*, which I later didn't include when I published it in Montevideo in 1998: "*I'm afraid the white masters have already corrupted you by making you repeat their own ideas and their own interests, not yours*." As the great Frantz Fanon once wrote, the colonized is a *déshumanized human*.[409] Or, even clearer in his earlier book, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), "*the White man obeys a complex of authority, a complex of leadership, while the Malagasy obeys a complex of dependence*."[410]

That role that the colonized, the dehumanized, fulfilled for centuries is now complemented by another type of dehumanized beings: bots, robots with artificial intelligence. In essence, it's the same thing but simplified by high technology.

For a long time, experts understood that one of the characteristics of bots was that (1) they didn't produce content and (2) they were single-topic. That's fine. We can see that the first point is consistent with the very etymology of the word *bot*, which derives from *robot* and, in turn, from the Czech *slave*. Meanwhile, the etymology of slave derives from *Slav*, but if we jump to the etymology of *addict*, we'll see that in ancient times it referred to *slave*, in the sense that the Romans understood them as individuals who don't think for themselves but are addicted, that is, *they speak* for another, they say what another wants them to say. A robot, a bot, a slave.

The second point refers to the fact that social media bots, generally, have a political objective, that is, one of power. They repeat like an addict, like a slave, for the benefit of their master. They don't have diverse interests, like a human before social media, meaning they don't talk about football and Hegel but only about their single topic. They're monothematic. The problem is that it's also possible, and very possible, to find humans who fit this profile of bots, of addicts, of slaves. At least fifteen years ago, we were reflecting on the new material and psychological nature we were entering, and in some articles, we mentioned something we later

included in the 2012 book *Cyborgs*: "*While universities are creating robots that increasingly resemble human beings, not only in their proven intelligence but now also in their ability to express and receive emotions, consumerist habits are making us increasingly similar to robots*."[411]

Today, even the most modest *bots* on social media are capable of expressing themselves with stutters and tics, while humans try to eliminate these from our nature. Then-presidential candidate Donald Trump, in the first three months of his 2016 campaign, quoted 150 of his own bots as if they were humans with something important to say. In turn, these quotes were reproduced by other humans and other bots.[412] A practice he continued after becoming president.

By 2015, a third of tweets and up to half of internet traffic was already generated by bots.[413] In many cases, bots have been humanized with all the flaws and habits of humans, such as consistently maintaining other accounts on different social media platforms with similar ideas and tics; or taking a reasonable amount of time to respond to an urgent topic. In 2014, a bot passed the Turing Test (designed in 1950 by computing genius Alan Turing) for the first time, convincing judges in a five-minute interview that it was a real human being. Thanks to this ability to replace humans with the sensitivity of the real, as when someone speaks our own language and expresses themselves like our own friends, these bots have been able to encourage social uprisings and, above all, dismantle real protests by real people with real problems.

The CEOs of mega social platforms like Twitter and Facebook excuse themselves for the proliferation of racist content by claiming that "we are not the arbiters of truth."[cxlix] Something that would be wonderfully correct if it weren't just a convenient illusion. Currently, the sensitivity toward racism in the United States has overshadowed other realities like classism or the exploitation of human beings at a distance for the benefit of the micro-business elite. These platforms arbitrate not only political positions, such as who is right in the Russia-NATO conflict or Trump-Biden, but their entire existence and psychological engineering is based on the

[cxlix] The most solid criticisms have been not only about political trends but also about the spread of fake news or racist content from Nazi groups and white supremacists. Only one current crime is mentioned, a consensus that hides or denies many other crimes, such as the international racism of neocolonialism, or the deep racism of double standards regarding refugees, or crimes that have not reached the status of being indisputable, like the economic abuse of some countries over others or the hijacking of democracies by billionaires.

ideology of consumption and the benefits of "free competition," one of the most obscene myths of our time, if there is another more obscene one.

It is no coincidence that the rebellious, revolutionary, and leftist youth of the 19th and 20th centuries were educated through books, while today's reactionary, conservative, and right-wing youth have been educated through social media. It is no coincidence that the spread of *fake news* from these "neutral networks" has proliferated around classic far-right themes, such as religion, tribalism, and racism.

After the most recent invasions and post-colonial wars by Western powers in Africa and the Middle East (Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen), the same phenomenon occurred as with Washington's wars in its backyard of Latin America: thousands began fleeing the chaos of the Global South to the only place where paid work could be found, the civilized North, and they were not welcomed. The borders of the United States and Europe were closed to "protect our culture," to "protect law and order," to "protect our borders," rights that were never respected when it came to the borders, culture, laws, and order of the others, the savages.

Due to the aging population in Germany and a certain level of sensibility from Chancellor Angela Merkel, the entry of several thousand Syrian refugees was permitted. But, as in the rest of Europe, immigrants were resisted as invaders. When this narrative proved insufficient, another classic of the genre was employed, executed with extreme demagogic skill by former President Donald Trump and most politicians of his party: "Black and poor immigrants are coming to rape our women." This recurring discourse from the pornographic imagination of the 19th century (feminist and educator Rebecca Latimer Felton recommended a thousand lashes to prevent free Black men from raping young blonde girls, despite the fact that the most frequent rapes were by white men against young Black women). By the time Rebecca Felton was elected the first female senator in the history of the United States in 1922, a portion of European and American scientists (contrary to what was asserted in various Latin American essays like those of Cuban José Martí or Peruvian González Prada) were convinced of the superiority of certain races over others, according to their own idea of superiority. In 1923, the specialist Carl Brigham wrote in his *Study of American Intelligence*: "*the superiority of our Nordic population over other groups such as the Alpines, Mediterranean Europeans, and Blacks is something that has been demonstrated*."[414] The same author would later regret this conclusion, considering it was not well-

founded in the available data, but popular culture and the powers that shape and manipulate its weaknesses had already moved like a tsunami in another direction. The 1930s were the peak of Nazism in Europe, and in the United States, hatred against Blacks and the expulsion of U.S. citizens who looked Mexican reached historic levels. The power of these theories did not end with Hitler's defeat; they continued in practice with medical experiments on Black Americans and the poor in Guatemala; they continued with imperialist wars and the mass sterilization of inferior races, as in Puerto Rico in the 1970s and Peru in the 1990s.[cl]

In 21st-century Europe, the false and centuries-old rumor was repeatedly spread that dark-skinned immigrants were killing men and raping poor, defenseless white European women. These rumors were never confirmed by statistics, but that is a detail easily dismissed by the enraged masses.

Another exercise in false rumors, fueled by the million-dollar market of hatred born from fear, plagued the victims of multiple massacres that occurred in the United States over the last two decades. Various platforms inhabited by anonymous flies circulated the version that these massacres had been staged, despite the fact that both the families and the graves of the victims were there to verify their existence. It is no coincidence that the groups responsible for viralizing these conspiracy theories were far-right, right-wing, or simply supporters of the political right, which loves guns.

Given all the human precedent, it is no mere coincidence that even bots are racist. In early 2016, Microsoft launched its star bot, a nonexistent girl with the linguistic background of a 19-year-old human who, equipped with artificial intelligence, could interact with real humans on Twitter and in phone chats like GroupMe. The chats with Tay (*Thinking About You*) were so realistic that they even included punctuation errors.[415] From this interaction in the "real world," Tay learned to be Tay. Shortly after these enriching conversations (much like a young woman in the past would learn from the discussions in the intellectual cafés of Paris or Montevideo),

[cl] Beyond the old Backyard, from 1971 to 1977 and with a budget of five million dollars (over 30 million at 2020 value), the International Program in Gynecology and Obstetrics trained 500 doctors in 60 countries, including Pinochet's Chile and the Shah's Iran. On April 21, 1977, the director of the Federal Government's Office of Population, Dr. R. T. Ravenholt, reported that Washington's goal was to sterilize 570 million poor women, a quarter of all fertile women in the world. (La frontera salvaje. 200 años de fanatismo anglosajón en América Latina, 2021, p. 502.)

Tay became a disgusting racist. To the point that Microsoft, surely not so much for moral reasons as for economic ones, decided to issue her a death certificate 16 hours after her birth. A short life, no doubt, but long enough to write nearly a hundred thousand tweet messages.

Other improved experiments (like Zo, more politically correct) lasted longer and failed just the same for similar reasons. Mega platforms like Facebook have tried to clean up all this environmental racism and sexism that feeds future AI. However, the technique of censoring pages and texts for including racist expressions closely resembles the current cancel culture that originated in the United States and has almost spread to other continents. Just as in various educational institutions, several teachers and even professors have lost their jobs for mentioning the word "black" when they intended to denounce racism in a text, document, or work of fiction, so too have bots censored texts that denounced racism against Indians or Blacks for including phrases that the bot misinterpreted in their overall context.[416]

The same problem exists with "biometric" or facial recognition technology, according to which the faces of non-white people were more likely to be recognized as suspicious.[417] Or simply not recognized as human faces. This observation is not new. In economic terms, it belongs to the prehistory of facial recognition techniques, denounced at least since 2009.[418] If we go back to photography technology from the 19th century, the story is not much different. According to film historian Richard Dyer, when the first photographers turned to portraiture in the 1840s, "they experimented with the chemistry of photographic material, the size of the aperture, the duration of development, and artificial light, proceeding under the assumption that what had to be done well was the appearance of the white face."[419]

Sexist Technology

TO THE RACISM OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES, from the influential *bots* to Artificial Intelligence still in its infancy, we must add all sorts of other human misfortunes that humanity itself has somewhat reduced, though not without great defeats. Such as sexism. For that, it would suffice to recall that the overwhelming majority of assistant androids are represented as

women. From the preferred voices of GPS systems to the more dominant *Alexa* from Amazon or *Siri* from Apple, they reproduce and amplify the role of women as secretaries and domestic workers.

The preferred bots and fake profiles (for their ability to attract followers) are those of attractive women according to the standard represented by models. At the same time, it was observed that in Ukraine before the CIA-backed coup in 2014, young mothers in need of making money while caring for their children were the most active segment of the population in this activity of fake profiles and comments for or against products in the market. During the 2012 parliamentary campaign, these human bots typically produced an average of 200 comments per day at a rate of one hundred dollars a week.[420]

Clearly, the cavemen who preceded artificial intelligence, whether human mercenaries or cheap, unsophisticated, industrially produced bots, were more than enough to manipulate millions of people. A few years later, artificial intelligence unleashed a repressed fear and an unacknowledged truth: intelligent robots are not needed to dominate human intelligence, which is always so proud of itself and so easily manipulated by the powers that be.

The Communication Cartels

WORLD WAR II WAS TO THE UNITED STATES what the discovery of America was to the declining Spain. Thanks to these unexpected events, both countries became the world's leading empires. In the case of the United States, the four-term president Franklin D. Roosevelt contributed to this salvation from destruction. His social and economic policies were labeled socialist by the opposition and were undoubtedly far more radical than those of any Latin American president or revolutionary—those who attempted something similar and were removed from power by U.S. private corporations with the ever-ready help of Washington's secret and intimidating power. Roosevelt, as President Rutherford B. Hayes had done half a century earlier, described the power of large corporations as inherently antidemocratic forces. In May 2009, Senator Richard Durbin summarized the influence of the "financial services industry" on legislators in Washington: "*The banks (and it's hard to believe, at a time when we're facing a banking crisis*

they created) remain the most powerful lobby on Capitol Hill and, frankly, they own Congress."[421]

Capitalists are like fireworks sellers. They take gunpowder, someone else's invention, have others manufacture the fireworks, and then put their name on the final product, which they promote in the media. Some get rich selling instant spectacle and entertainment, knowing that if something goes wrong, the municipal firefighters will solve the problem for free—after all, that's what people pay taxes to the damned state for.

But the reaction against the Roosevelt Era was not just the media magnates' Nazism, like that of his former friend William Randolph Hearst, nor just McCarthy's anti-communist paranoia, but above all, the neoliberal reaction of Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman. The neoliberal dogma, along with its allegories like the Trickle-Down Theory, accelerated the process of capital concentration, financial power, and *the wealth of nations*. This process of concentration could not exclude the media, just as the Holy Roman Empire could not exclude the Catholic Church. The dominant media are the fundamental arm in shaping public opinion, especially in liberal democracies. In 1999, media expert Robert McChesney defined the process of media conglomerate concentration as *cartels*. "*The domination of an extremely lucrative market by internet service provider (ISP) cartels like Comcast, Verizon, and AT&T (economic parasites offering terrible internet and cell phone services at ridiculous prices) is undeniable proof of their lobbying power*."[422]

Let's take just one example. On October 10, 1990, a 15-year-old Iraqi girl named Nayirah gave testimony at the United Nations about the actions of the Iraqis, who, she claimed, were taking babies out of incubators and leaving them to die on hospital floors. This heart-wrenching testimony was cited and used by President George H. Bush and the politicians who promoted the First Gulf War to "liberate Kuwait." It was even confirmed by Amnesty International before the NGO corrected itself. Two years later, when the story had already been written, it was revealed that Nayirah was the daughter of Kuwait's ambassador to the United States and that her testimony was fabricated and orchestrated by the public relations firm Hill & Knowlton, which owns multiple branches in various countries, from Argentina to Hong Kong, and has been a key player in numerous Public Opinion campaigns in favor of carcinogenic industries like tobacco or those responsible for environmental destruction like Monsanto, big oil companies, or new extractive techniques like *fracking*.

At the same time, the media, overwhelmingly owned by private conglomerates, promoted the 2003 invasion of Iraq with new falsehoods, and later, when those falsehoods were acknowledged by their own promoters, the corporation-government-media coalition worked to justify the crime against humanity under the guise of other noble principles and humanitarian values. No one, neither in the government nor in the media nor in the lobbying industry, was brought to trial for blatantly lying and leading the world into a colossal tragedy. No one. Not even did they pay for their crimes with public condemnation or the economic ruin of their narrative empires.

To make the job easier and more unpunished, long before the Invasion of Iraq, the lobbies in Washington pushed for new laws to radicalize the deregulation of the information market. The FCC (Federal Communications Commission) took on this goal, which, at the time, was not achieved thanks to three million signatures and the organized resistance of the people below—which sometimes works and would work even better if those below were not demoralized and demobilized every day by those very same media.

Naturally, the power of propaganda has countless tentacles and is not restricted only to the major narrative media. The narrative also comes from the antidemocratic institutions that dominate international politics and shape (at least to a sufficient extent) the consciousness of the people. The power of propaganda (that is, the creation of a reality through a narrative) was revealed once again at the 2022 climate change summit, COP27 in Egypt. Coca-Cola (the initiator of plastic bottle pollution in the 70s) was the official sponsor of the summit, while Hill & Knowlton was named the official Public Relations firm of the event.

Mercenary Platforms

IN THE UNITED STATES, THERE IS an old political joke: "How do you know when a politician isn't lying? Well, when they're not moving their lips." This popular sarcasm never stopped politicians from lying to the people nor did it stop the people from distancing themselves from the tragic lies they patriotically supported, such as genocidal wars that were invariably labeled as "self-defense" or "defense of others' freedom."

This is not radical skepticism. It doesn't quite reach that level. It's an unfair skepticism because it's indiscriminate. This way, it lumps the honest and the liars into the same bag and creates a popular demoralization that always ends up benefiting the powerful, who can lie better because they hold the primary instruments of political manipulation—namely, the major media. But at all times, there were politicians and journalists who, with no other option but to participate from within the system, had the honesty and courage to go against their own interests and say what they believed to be the truth.

In 1889, the former U.S. president, Rutherford Hayes (known by his slave-owning adversaries in the South, who refused to accept the legitimacy of his electoral victory, as Rutherfraud, Ruther-fraud), wrote in his diary: "The problem lies in the great wealth and power in the hands of a few unscrupulous individuals who control capital. In the national Congress and in state legislatures, hundreds of laws are passed dictated by the interests of these men and against the interests of the workers… This is not a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. It is a government of the corporations, by the corporations, and for the corporations."423

A year later, Senator John Sherman succeeded in getting Congress to pass his bill (known to this day as the "Sherman Antitrust Act"), which prohibited unfair competition by large corporations (what, among other practices, both in the United States and elsewhere in the world, would be called "dumping," "selling at a loss," or "innocent monopoly"). The same mentor of Milton Friedman at the University of Chicago, Professor Henry C. Simons, at the time one of the champions of *laissez-faire* (let it be), was quite clear about the dangers of a company accumulating so much power that it could influence a government.[cli] Moreover, the theorist of the American right acknowledged that to protect democracy, it was necessary to socialize (through governments) services like electricity and infrastructure such as roads, rails, and bridges.[424] [clii] On April 29, 1938, in a speech before Congress, the "socialist president," Franklin D. Roosevelt, put it explicitly:

[cli] "*The great enemy of democracy is monopoly, in all its forms... corporations, trade associations, unions—or, in general, the organization and concentration of power in functional classes*". Henry C. Simons *Economic Policy for a Free Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Simons (1947), p. 43.

[clii] Robert McChesney observed in 2016 that "*ironically, the founder and owner of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg, has always defended his company by defining it as a 'utility'* ('public service company')" (McChesney, p. xlix)

"*The first truth is that the freedom of a democracy will never be safe if the people tolerate the growth of private power to the point where it becomes stronger than their own democratic state. That, in essence, is fascism: ownership of the government by an individual, a group, or any other private power with the ability to influence and control. The second truth is that the freedom of a democracy is not safe if its business system does not provide employment, produce, and distribute goods in a way that maintains an acceptable standard of living for its workers.*"[425]

It goes without saying that this tradition of American political thought, which emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, along with the progressive and anti-imperialist movements supported by activists like the most important writer of his generation, Mark Twain; the father of American psychology, William James; the abolitionist George Boutwell; and even a millionaire like Andrew Carnegie, was replaced a few decades later (and especially a century later with *Reaganomics*) by what is now considered "the *true* American tradition."

At first glance, the apparent anarchy of the internet and social media seems more akin to the anarchists of the 19th century and the socialists of the 20th century than to the hierarchical, monarchical, feudal, and fascist societies of all kinds. However, what appears to be a free and horizontal relationship of individuals capable of deciding their own destiny without the dictatorship of a king, a church, or a lord in a castle is precisely the opposite. Perhaps because, as we said earlier, the powers that be always hijack innovations, as happened with the popularization of the written press in the mid-19th century. Technological innovations, not new ideas.

In countries like China, one of these higher powers is concentrated in the government, although politics is always shaped by the largest economic sectors. Studies on censorship in China are more difficult to conduct for several reasons. First, because there is indeed a deliberate opacity on the part of the Beijing government, which is even more secretive in releasing data than companies like Twitter. On the other hand, Chinese censorship is largely confined to its borders, while capitalist hegemony is transnational and strategically combines *tolerance* for groups that oppose its interests, much like the United States combined a limited democracy, hijacked by a minority, with the practice of slavery and the dispossession of indigenous or Hispanic American nations for a century. Moreover, Western studies on Chinese censorship often lack rigor. For example, in studies like those by British academic Gillian Bolsover, a professor at the

University of Leeds, among others, there is an abundance of "testimonies" from anonymous individuals that provide almost no verifiable data beyond their own experiences. This anonymity may be justified if we consider the fear of reprisals from a dictatorial or centralized government, but it also strips each narrative of academic or verifiable value. Especially when we later discover that some testimonies, some authors, are promoted by the secret machinery of the West, whose historical reputation is all too well known.

In her analysis of networks in China, Professor Bolsover relativizes several Western myths about censorship in that country, which turns out to be less Orwellian and more complex than it seems. However, the same professor also observes that the Chinese government "*maintains a high level of control over information within its borders, following the Marxist principle of the media, for which truth is more important than the political utility of information*."[426] There is little debate about the centralized control of the Chinese government, but the second part of this statement contains a radical ambiguity and imprecision regarding what Marxism prescribes and what it criticizes or observes about the capitalist world. Even setting aside this philosophical discussion, we could look at more concrete facts to observe that, precisely, the press in the service of capitalism has done nothing different. It would suffice to recall the manipulations of the yellow press in the 19th century, the imperialist press during the Banana Wars in the early 20th century, the manipulations of public sentiment and opinion in the United States by Edward Bernays and PR; the aggressive manipulations of the press in dozens of countries by Washington and the CIA; the creation of public opinion by large private companies hired by corporations to create false social movements (see the chapter "Social Relations and *Astroturfing*"); or, more recently, the manipulation of algorithms on social media by a handful of megacorporations like Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram, controlled by a handful of capitalist entrepreneurs as far removed from citizen control and participatory democracy as the Chinese government itself.

In liberal democracies like the United States, corporations play a central role in shaping public opinion, but governments are the next level of influence. In 2015, for example, President Obama held a conversation with people supposedly "from the public," a tradition they call a "town hall," but in this case, it was conducted through Twitter. The slogan and hashtag were "Ask the President." According to one of Twitter's veteran

employees, then-CEO Dick Costolo ordered the design of an algorithm to filter out any uncomfortable or abusive questions directed at the president. Costolo resigned a month after this event but denied the claim of manipulation in favor of the president. He did not deny that such manipulations were possible, which is what truly matters.[427]

A more recent case that was confirmed involved the creation of a fake army of people to attack the protests of the Native Americans in Dakota, who opposed the construction of a pipeline through their sacred lands. Those in charge of the manipulation operated from MacDill Air Force Base in Florida. The practice is much older. In 2011, it was revealed that the U.S. military's Central Command, Centcom, had contracted a California-based corporation called Ntrepid for nearly three million dollars to create fake profiles ("sock puppets") managed by military personnel to spread "pro-American" propaganda, similar to the software used by the Chinese government to silence dissidents and akin to what was used in Washington's psychological warfare in the Middle East, such as in the so-called Operation Earnest Voice (OEV).

According to the manual for this military operation, the puppets, operating consistently from virtual systems and multiple VPNs around the world, had to be "filled with backgrounds, personal stories, details, and cyber presences that were technically, culturally, and geographically consistent." All of this, always, under unquestionable excuses like "national security." The goal of these "sock puppets" was (and is) to create public opinion and artificial consensus. In this way, the military could operate up to 50 controllers with the ability to manage fake identities from their workstations "without fear of being discovered by sophisticated adversaries." In their defense, members of the military claimed that none of these manipulations would be in English, as it would be illegal to "target [manipulate] the American public."[428]This, on one hand, is a fallacy that has already been exposed by revelations such as those from Congress in 1975about Operation Mockingbird, and on the other hand, it is a confession of how little humans and laws matter beyond the borders of the "Land of the Law." In fact, impersonating someone else on the internet is punishable by years in prison under U.S. law, a law that has already been applied to individuals who do not belong to any of these legal super mafias.

Thus, the paradox arises that in the seemingly free and anarchic world of the internet, power is more concentrated than ever. One only

needs to look at the results, which in turn are causes: the growing disparities in capital accumulation—today, a handful of families own more than the majority of the population in "developed" countries like the United States. The same can be said on a global scale and in the virtual reality sphere of social media. A few platforms control billions of users worldwide and, although they pose as neutral every day, in fact, they decide what these true masses of the 21st century should think with a simple algorithm change.

In countries with significant economic and military arsenals, disinformation agencies are what spy agencies were during the Cold War and before. In the case of Russia, for example, this role is fulfilled by the Internet Research Agency (IRA) or the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISS). In the bloc of hegemonic Capitalism (mostly summarized in the countries that make up NATO), government agencies are effectively complemented by private agencies. What is the ideology of these megacorporations? To answer this question, one must follow the money trail.

In 2018, Cambridge Analytica was dissolved, not because it wasn't a big business but because it was caught trafficking the personal data of Facebook users without their consent. As was the case with various massacres in the Middle East by civilized armies, the truth only came to light after a leak from an employee named Christopher Wylie and the journalist from *The Guardian* Harry Davies.[cliii]

Cambridge Analytica was a company linked to the British monarchy and the Conservative Party, and its goal was personalized political propaganda in developed countries. The idea was to speak directly to Juan at the bar. However, and not by coincidence, it had emerged from the British company SCL Group (Strategic Communication Laboratories), a private corporation that still provides military services and has been dedicated since 1990 to the study, manipulation of mass behavior, and psychological warfare in "developing" countries. SCL Group, a NATO client, defines itself as a "global election management agency" and is recognized as part of the disinformation industry.[429]

[cliii] In the military sphere, the most well-known cases of leaks are those of Chelsea Manning and Lieutenant Colonel Dean W. Korsak, who exposed the bombing of a market in Baghuz, Syria, where nearly a hundred civilians died, concealed by the Pentagon. The bet of the great political and military powers is that "if it's not leaked, it doesn't exist," which is why any temptation to reveal the truth must be punished, reaching the absurdity of the Julian Assange case, where those who committed massacres became the judges of the one who exposed them.

Cambridge Analytica successfully worked in favor of Brexit and for some Republican Party candidates in the United States, resulting in the election of Senator Ted Cruz and President Donald Trump. As everyone knows, in politics and big business, there are no returns. For Ted Cruz's electoral campaign alone, the Mercer family (Robert, his wife Diana, and their daughter Rebekah), shareholders of Cambridge Analytica, contributed $37 million. In turn, the family's company was hired by the senator's campaign for at least $5.8 million. Not by coincidence, Russia's bot network also contributed to both the Brexit and Trump's presidency in the same year. Five out of six bots supported the Brexit option, while two-thirds of the bots (which wrote 2.2 million tweets in just the three months before the election) supported Trump's candidacy. The proportion was lower in the 2018 Mexican presidential elections, where a quarter of the tweets were generated by bots.

In 2017, shortly after the success of the manipulation of public opinion that led to the impeachment process of President Dilma Rousseff in April 2016, Cambridge Analytica opened an office in São Paulo, Brazil. According to Symantec (one of the largest security providers, owned by Broadcom Inc.), by 2016 Brazil had already become the eighth-largest producer of political bots.[430] For its part, the Center for Studies, Response, and Treatment of Security Incidents in Brazil reported nearly a million cyberattacks in 2014 alone.[431]

We can also speculate, given the similarity of the three phenomena, that it is very likely that the plebiscite on the peace agreements in Colombia (the third major electoral surprise of 2016) was due to a similar manipulation of social networks.

The scandal over the use of private information from tens of millions of users without their consent ended with Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg appearing before the U.S. Congress. But that was part of the circus to entertain critics of a system and a practice that continued with impunity. The accused takes responsibility for part of the "mistake," sheds a few tears, and (true to Protestant culture), the good-hearted are moved and believe him. And nothing happened here. Before the U.S. Congress finished its investigation, Cambridge Analytica was dissolved with the approval of a court in England, which dismissed a lawsuit initiated by David Carroll, an American professor, and allowed the company to keep its data secret.

However, some studies have managed to prove the manipulation of social networks to the point of changing the very political language used by users. The turning point was 2016. Before that, no differences were detected between social platforms and common language. From that year on, a similarity was detected, as if a small group (a coordinated group of voices) was behind the inoculation of each social network. The new pattern revealed a nativist and anti-immigrant insistence. In the United States, the rhetoric of the political right, pro-Israel and anti-Semitic, leads to a pronounced hatred of the press, though for the wrong reasons: according to this view, all media belong to the Jewish elite, which, in turn, tries to replace whites with corrupt blacks and mestizos, a population easily manipulated—the "superior race," white ethnicities are neither manipulable nor corrupt...

As one of my characters said almost three decades ago, "*there is no better strategy against a true rumor than to invent a false one that pretends to confirm it*."[432]

The truth doesn't sell; lie to me slowly

A STUDY BY MIT ANALYZED 126,000 rumors generated and spread on Twitter and concluded that false stories spread six times faster than true ones. "*Falsehood spreads more, reaches farther, moves faster, and penetrates deeper than the truth, across all categories of information*." The study also showed that the conclusion remained the same even after removing all bots from the samples. "*False news is 70 percent more likely to be shared than true news. Meanwhile, true stories take six times longer to reach 1,500 people than false ones […] Falsehoods reach a cascade depth of 10, about 20 times faster than true facts*." [433]

This confirmation likely reveals a psychological weakness inherent in individuals and collectives, but it is undoubtedly taken into account and exploited by those who possess significant capital, both to increase their commercial profits and to confirm their ideological dominance. To achieve this, it is necessary to revive the old practice of secretly manipulating public opinion.

The anonymous soldiers of the Dark Web fulfill the role of the masked figure, a tradition born from the manipulation and distortion of the myth of Zorro, later conveniently continued with Lone Ranger, Superman, and Captain America. The culture of masks is inherent to the narrative/action *duality* of the Anglo-American world.[434] They are the dark heroes, like Batman, who assume the role of guardians of truth and morality, fighting from the shadows and anonymity against the villains who seek to take over a world that already has an owner.

Their barroom conspiracies, in the best Homer Simpson style, are not based on any evidence and, like religious stories, rely on a repeated narrative, free from any objective proof, and, above all, on the infinite faith of the parishioner to defy any logic. The fragmentation of logic and the repetition of discourse find their model in the rosary of the Catholic tradition, but Protestants, aside from masculinizing that tradition without the visual and sensual elements of Catholicism, elevated it to a level of fanaticism with more material goals. If something can be proven, then it is science or something equally suspicious, derived from academia or some leftist agenda that seeks to destroy the "true essence" of the country chosen by God.

Three days before the crucial 2016 U.S. presidential election, a minor newspaper in Colorado, the *Denver Guardian*, published an article titled "FBI Agent Suspected In Hillary Email Leaks Found Dead In Apparent Murder-Suicide." The article reported that "*Investigators believe that FBI agent Michael Brown, 45, shot and killed his wife Susan Brown, 33, on Friday night before setting the couple's house on fire and then taking his own life. Brown worked for 12 years at the Washington D.C. Metropolitan Police Department before spending the last six years at the FBI*." The news was shared on social media, reaching over fifteen million readers.

On November 23, after the elections that decided Donald Trump's victory, the historic state radio network, NPR, published an investigation on the matter. With the assistance of engineer John Jansen of Master-McNeil Inc., they managed to identify the author of one of the most influential *fake news* stories in recent history. The only news from "*The Oldest Newspaper in Denver*" had been a recent invention by Jestin Coler, who managed to earn up to $30,000 a month. Once discovered, Coler, a respectable 40-year-old family man, registered Democrat, and voter for Hillary Clinton and a political science graduate, admitted that he had started by creating fake media and profiles to infiltrate and expose a group of right-

wing extremists, known in the U.S. as "*alt-right*." It didn't go well. He then tried writing fake news for *liberals* (for the American left) "*but they never bit the bait*." Fame and money came to him thanks to the believing nature of the right. After inventing the story people wanted to read, "*our social media guys would plant them in Trump's groups and forums, and that was it. The thing spread like wildfire*."[435]

All the fake news invented by Coler, who eventually had 25 writers on his payroll, spread with great ease. One of his successful *fake news* stories, published on January 3, 2014, in *NationalReport.net*, had denounced the use of "*food stamps*" (U.S. government assistance for buying food) by the poor to purchase marijuana. For some reason, all over the world, many people feel outraged when the state takes charge of distributing charity. It always feels better to do it oneself through donations so that God can see it. As a result, Republican Senator Vicki Marble of Colorado introduced a bill to prevent "food stamp" users from using them to buy marijuana.

A study by Sophie Nightingale and Hany Farid from the Department of Psychology at Lancaster University and the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science at the University of California showed not only that AI-generated faces are indistinguishable from real ones but that they are also more trustworthy. According to the researchers, "synthesized faces can be considered more trustworthy because they resemble the average face more closely."[436]

For a while, Coler tried to get out of the *fake news* business, but, as NPR journalist Laura Syndell summarized, "*hundreds of entrepreneurs will be ready to take his place, and it will become increasingly difficult to distinguish their websites from real news sites. Now they know that fake news sells, and they'll only be in it for the money*."

Similar stories abound in both the so-called First and Third Worlds. As just one example, I'll share one that borders on satire and circus. On November 2, 2021, followers of former President Donald Trump and the virtual sect QAnon gathered at Dealey Plaza and AT&T Discovery Plaza in downtown Dallas to welcome *Camelot*, that is, John F. Kennedy Jr. Several protesters carried signs announcing the ticket for the next election: "TRUMP/JFK JR 2020." "Trump will be named the 19th president alongside a new vice president, JFK Jr.," wrote a prominent QAnon influencer with over 250,000 followers on Telegram. According to the followers of this well-known sect with growing influence in U.S. politics, Trump

would become "1 of the 7 new Kings. Most likely, the King of Kings," thus fulfilling the biblical prophecy of Revelation 17.[437]

Puritan Pornography

ALTHOUGH JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY JR. NEVER SHOWED UP—because, as everyone knows, he died in 1999—this did not discourage the sect of believers who, since 2017, have insisted that there is a global leftist conspiracy, especially in the United States, dedicated to having sex with children and drinking their blood ("*blood-drinking*").

As we've seen before, one of the historical obsessions of the far right, aside from believing they are the chosen race of some singular God, has always been sex—especially other people's sex. On March 8, 2022, the Twitter account *Libs of TikTok* posted a video of an elementary school teacher giving a sexuality lesson in Kentucky. The teacher was labeled a "predator." At the time, this account had 648,000 followers, and its profile was clearly anti-LGBT. The next day, this post was shared and discussed on Laura Ingraham's show on the influential FOX News channel. Ingraham posed the rhetorical question, later picked up by The Washington Post a month later: "*When did our public schools become what they are now, training centers for gender identity radicals?*" The Post suggested that the anonymous interviewee on several far-right channels and owner of *Libs of TikTok* is Chaya Raichik, a real estate agent from Brooklyn. Raichik (self-identified as an Orthodox Jew) had been promoting various stories about child sex trafficking and similar topics that immediately attract far-right followers and had participated in the January 6, 2021, assault on the Capitol. According to the same outlet, the primary purpose of this account and similar far-right ones is to provoke outrage and anger in millions, which it had achieved with views and shares.

The political impact was immense. For example, regarding the "*Don't Say Gay" law passed on March 28, 2022. According to The Washington Post: "Libs of TikTok had a direct impact on the [Florida] legislation. DeSantis's press secretary, Christina Pushaw, acknowledged that the account had 'opened her eyes' and helped her with the state's bill that prohibits discussions about sexuality or gender identity from kindergarten through third grade, known as the*

"Don't Say Gay" law. She [the governor's secretary] and Libs of TikTok have interacted publicly at least 138 times."[438]

In April 2023, the principal of Tallahassee Classical School in Florida was removed after showing Michelangelo's David in one of her art classes. Some parents accused Carrasquilla of exposing their innocent teenagers to pornographic material, and the school's board gave her two options: resign or be fired.

Publicity and the Power of the Personal

IN A CONSUMERIST AND HIGHLY irrational culture, fear and sex sell without competition. Their channels are not driven by any rational or complex ideas but by the murky labyrinth of the visceral, the personal, the unbelievable—things that can capture attention and provoke anger and reaction, whether through consumption, voting, or repressing others. Contemporary art (propaganda, advertising) pretends to be sanitized from politics, but it is the most powerful instrument of this consumerist capitalist politics. Advertising, the most popular art of the Modern and Postmodern Era, is the art of persuasion for economic, utilitarian, and social power purposes. Although it is still an art, its foundations have been studied and tested for over a century, becoming a harder science than psychology itself.

In 1917, George Creel, the director of the Committee on Public Information (CPI), created a squad of 75,000 men called the "*Four Minute Men*" to sell World War I in the United States.[cliv] Besides understanding the importance of Hollywood celebrities in public opinion, Creel perfectly grasped that the average citizen was influenced by something personal, like the opinion of a drunkard drinking elbow-to-elbow with a sober individual in a bar. Not much different from the effect of social media today and something very characteristic of Protestant culture: that citizen saw and still sees concrete faces, not abstract ideas; visceral reactions, not complex analyses. It is the language of the gut connecting to the reptilian brain, not the cerebral cortex dialoguing with the heart.

[cliv] At the time, Edward Bernays was the director of the Latin News Service section of the CPI.

On the other hand, Creel's project was based on a recent discovery: a person's attention span for a product being sold lasts no more than four minutes. A century later, the conservative group dedicated to creating media content, known as PragerU, has exceeded that limit by just one minute. All their videos are five minutes long, acknowledging the same reason for that limit: "*Most people don't have the attention span for serious topics or simply don't have the time*."[439]

Prager University, referred to in the media as "PragerU," was founded in 2009 to produce propaganda videos in favor of right-wing policies in the United States. It is very difficult to find examples that come close from the left or progressive side. Like Trump University, PragerU is not an accredited university but a YouTube channel with over a billion viewers and annual earnings of $28 million, largely from donations that taxpayers avoid paying to the government (what is known in this country as "*tax-deductible donations*") or from oil industry magnates. Approximately 40 percent of its earnings go toward self-promotion in other media, none of which reaches the thousands of high school students who work for free to promote its ideology in exchange for fleeting visibility on social media. Its agenda is not only reactionary in domestic politics but also shapes opinions on international issues, predictably demonizing countries like Iran or Palestine, often taking advantage of the time and inexperience of students who haven't even finished high school, as was the case with a 15-year-old liberal-minded boy like Matt Knaster, who, after gaining popularity for his videos with predictable platitudes for American politics, ended up converting to a conservative in the style of PragerU consumers.[440] Another gem for Karl Marx.

The goal of these unaccredited platforms is to counter the tradition of real universities, the majority of which have been, for generations, left-leaning or progressive—perhaps the only institutional tradition, aside from unions, where conservatives are neither the majority nor dominated politically or financially by a right-wing elite. In 2015, PragerU considered that, due to his lack of puritanism, Trump was "*unfit to be a candidate for the presidency, let alone president*," but shortly after, they supported him, claiming that "*the left is a cancer*," so an unfit person in the White House was better than any other disease.[441] Soon after, they expanded their business by creating PragerU Kids, to bring "Judeo-Christian values" and salvation to preschoolers—like any holy church. In addition to warning the

world about the lies of climate change, global warming, and the lies of science that contradict faith and religion.

PragerU's motto, widely reproduced on other platforms by other fake universities, is "*Give us five minutes and we'll give you a semester*." Like promises to learn a new language in three weeks, this promise does not replace a semester at a real university; it replaces the idea that learning is a process that takes time and organization by specialists in a given topic with its opposite, tailored to the contemporary consumer: I pay, and I want immediate satisfaction. Clearly, it's part of the McDonaldization of universities. The consumer satisfies their hunger in a few minutes and doesn't perceive the effects on their health, so they return and become a fanatical consumer and defender (propagandist) of this pathology. The *distance* factor turns any video and any charlatan into something unreachable and irrefutable, like a study presented at a seminar of experts on a specific topic.

Currently, PragerU presents itself as what it is: "a media platform dedicated to promoting pro-American values. Our videos educate, inspire, and entertain millions of viewers…" Nothing more to add.

Denialism and faith above all and above everyone

IN 2020, GOVERNOR RON DeSantis enacted another law requiring all primary and secondary schools to certify that they are teaching the new generations about the Holocaust—the Jewish Holocaust, because there have been many holocausts in history. At the time, senators from the African American community also managed to include in the curriculum a mention of the Ocoee Massacre, where 30 Black people were killed in 1920, which, to understand endemic racism and social injustices in just the last two centuries, is like explaining the human body by its shadow.

By law, also since 2022, in those same Florida secondary schools, it is forbidden to discuss the racist history of the United States. The reason, according to Governor DeSantis, is that "*no one should be instructed to feel as if they are not equal or ashamed of their race. In Florida, we will not allow the agenda of the far left to take over our schools and workplaces. There is no place for indoctrination or discrimination in Florida*." If it's not talked about, it doesn't exist. On this side of the Atlantic, racism doesn't exist and never

has. If it's not talked about, it doesn't exist. On this side of the Atlantic, racism doesn't exist and never has, and that's not called indoctrination because it's our indoctrination.

As we developed earlier, the method of "close your eyes and believe" is ancient and has been kept alive and thriving by education, intellectual training, and religious thought. Not by chance, this way of thinking favors far-right ideologies like nativism, conservatism, fascism, and Nazism. We also saw how the growing confusion, especially at an early age, between the current world and the alternative reality of social media, computational propaganda, and conspiratorial platforms has erased the boundaries between reality and fiction. *Homophily*, the attitude of accepting only ideas that align with the believer's desires, has two consequences: if reality doesn't align with our desires, too bad for reality; if, on the contrary, reality crushes us because it's stronger than us, then we deny reality.

From the beginning of territorial expansion, first, and geopolitical expansion later, the strategy of denial consisted of provoking a reaction from the neighbor they sought to attack, whether they were savage Indians, Mexicans of impure blood, tropical Blacks who didn't know how to govern themselves, or poor whites sick with communist ideology. To the reaction of the adversary, the enemy, followed the classic sequence: "we had to defend ourselves," "we will never forget," and the call to arms, which were never in short supply, to save the honor of the nation and the superior race. This practice was repeated countless times up to today, though with some variations of the moment, the most recent case being the war in Ukraine—"we don't know why the Russians invaded that country; we were only exercising the right to defend ourselves by expanding NATO and surrounding them with missiles…"

One of the most repetitive forms in recent years consists of attributing to the adversary our own flaws, actions, or desires. It will suffice to cite two dramatic examples from the last five years in the United States. We can understand that the societies of the so-called "Third World" are still financial, ideological, and cultural colonies, which is why they adopt any trendy tendency from the obsolete "First World" (the "developed world" or the one that has established its development on the plunder of the Third World with no remote intention of possible reparations).

Let's look at this same pathology in our post-medieval capitalism. In August 2017, in Charlottesville, Virginia, a group of citizens took to the

streets to protest against the march of *Unite the Right*, a racist group made up of sympathizers of the Confederacy, Nazis, and white supremacists of all colors. The peaceful protest, without the display of war weapons (typical of white supremacist groups like the KKK once defeated in the Civil War that outlawed slavery), was attacked by members of Unite the Right. 30 anti-racist protesters were injured. On August 12, a member of the far-right group, identifying himself as a neo-Nazi, drove his car into the crowd, injuring 19 people and killing one of them. Almost immediately, headlines began to circulate like "*The Charlottesville car attacker is an anti-Trump supporter and Antifa sympathizer*." The platform *PuppetStringNews.com* published photos of a young man resembling the killer supporting protests against the criminalization of immigrants and another with a shirt featuring the portrait of Black musician Jimi Hendrix, which was enough to ignite the fuse of those who *wanted to believe* that "we were attacked first" and "we are victims of a plot by demonic forces"—the Indians, the Blacks, the Mexicans, the banana republics, the communists, the Muslims, the Palestinians, the Chinese…

Antifa (anti-fascist) will be frequently mentioned by far-right groups (fascists) like the Alt-Right. As, for example, in the attack by the same far-right groups on the U.S. Capitol on September 6, 2021. This attack, the result of a real conspiracy, was based on the obscurantist but widely repeated theory in the history of this country, according to which the groups in power (made visible by skin color, not by the real power of their social position) are actually victims of the corruption of the inferior races whom they must rescue from chaos while they plan to exterminate them. From this come the 19th-century theories about the sexual violation of free Black men against blonde daughters, the theory of the great replacement and extermination of the white race, brought back into fashion in the 21st century to channel the social and economic frustrations of those who used to dictate the destiny of the world.

A few months earlier, on June 2, 2020, the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC had been surrounded by militarized police (a growing phenomenon of neoliberalism worldwide) and the National Guard to prevent a peaceful protest by Blacks from descending into chaos. Blacks are always identified with chaos and danger. The protesters were demanding justice for the murder of George Floyd, a Black man who had paid with a counterfeit twenty-dollar bill and who died suffocated under the knee of

one of the police officers, an act that only repeated and reminded us of a chronic pattern of racial violence and discrimination.

Different was the treatment of the police to protect the Congress where the legislators were. The organized harassment of Congress aimed to nullify the November elections under more conspiratorial theories without factual basis or evidence of vote-counting fraud. Exactly as happened at the end of the 19th century when some freed Black individuals won local elections and were removed by mobs of white people. The white supremacists always considered themselves entitled to special rights. To contain a much larger, armed group with a long history of violence, a few police officers tried to control the mob armed with mere batons. The result is well-known: the mob broke into the Capitol, shattered windows, displaced lawmakers, vandalized, looted, and triumphantly waved the racist Confederate flag in the halls of the Union government that had defeated them in 1885. In total, five people died, and dozens were hospitalized.

From her televised pulpit, Fox News host Laura Ingraham claimed that the Capitol assailants "probably weren't all Trump supporters, and there are some reports that Antifa sympathizers may have been scattered among the crowd." For millions of believers, "probably" means "proven." Her colleagues, moral spokespersons of the far-right in the United States, Sean Hannity and Tucker Carlson, confirmed the theory as only prophets can—by dismissing any evidence. The same was done by one of the most celebrated far-right agitators, radio commentator Rush Limbaugh, shortly before his death. In the 24 hours following the assault, the hypothesis that Antifa was responsible was mentioned 400,000 times on the internet.[442]

Denialism manifests in at least two ways: outright denial of something (climate change) or attributing causes tailored to the consumer (economic decline, political and social violence). In 2022, for example, contrary to studies on the subject, influential Fox News host Sean Hannity claimed that "*conservatives gained followers on Twitter after the company announced its deal with Elon Musk because Twitter had become an anti-conservative and anti-Trump platform*."[443] Academic studies contradicting this with quantitative analyses don't matter.

More traditional is the accusation of being "liberal" (leftist, socialist) leveled at major media outlets, from the *New York Times* to the television network *CNN*. The rest of the world sees it very differently, but that doesn't matter either as long as one is a hegemonic superpower. Even less so when the mindset through which reality is viewed stems from deep

religious fanaticism that creates its own factual world, like a tailor crafting a suit to fit the consumer.

Personalization of Propaganda

IN 2016, I WAS WRITING the novel *Silicon 5.0* about identity theft, the commercialization of AI-equipped sex dolls, and the inoculation of human traumas into robots. The story begins with a heart attack suffered by the protagonist, Facundo, an Argentine immigrant and successful businessman living in Daytona Beach, Florida. Due to these specific circumstances, I spent some time researching hospitals and clinics in the area specializing in the recovery of patients who had suffered heart problems. A few days later, my mailbox was flooded with paper advertisements for clinics and cardiology specialists. Two years later, on the very day I turned 50, I received a beautiful invitation with gold-lettered cards for a free lunch at a distinguished restaurant to discuss options for my funeral and other benefits my family would receive from the company.

Naturally, we take these events as mere anecdotes. Similarly, we often claim that we don't care if we're being spied on, neither in our private lives nor in our university classes, because we have nothing to hide. But those of us who have nothing to hide are us, not them, the legal thieves of personal data. We can turn the accusation around and ask: If secret agencies have nothing to hide from their citizens, why do none of them, not even the senators not on the Security Committee, have any idea what they do every day with the rest of us mortals? In the same way, I've clarified more than once that I have nothing against millionaires—I just don't want them to wield their economic power in politics, becoming first-class citizens at best, or de facto rulers at worst, which is the most common scenario.

Commercial espionage is not only a subject of study for political espionage and the ideological police of the moment, but they also share data and resources. According to media expert Robert McChesney, "*commercial surveillance is closely linked to military surveillance… That's why we are all indebted to Edward Snowden…*" Then, paraphrasing former President Dwight Eisenhower: "*There is no doubt that any digital and media reform will conflict with the military-industrial-digital complex*."[444]

The same applies to the theft or collection of personal data. Since politics reflects a paradigm of social domination, and the logic of business and economic profit prevails as a sacred dogma, this transparent ideology is what reigns in politics.[clv] If we momentarily set aside the paradigmatic logic of how power is organized in societies, we can see countless examples of concrete actions in this same vein. For instance, in 2018, the *New York Times* revealed that Facebook provided 150 corporations with its users' data, including their personal messages, without any user consent.[445]

According to several studies, the two most vulnerable groups for the consumption and distribution of fake news are those under 19 and those over 65.[446] Apparently, this is because the former lack the critical thinking tools more common in the Age of Books, and the latter lack the necessary experience in the digital world. This is why the advertising agencies of the underworld always bet on these two groups: the older ones to spread the old fictions displayed on their screens, and the younger ones to turn them into new believers.

In 1995, MIT professor Nicholas Negroponte had prophesied that with the internet, each individual would have a personalized summary of world news, which he called the "Daily Me" (an expression difficult to translate, but it could be "Me Today"). Each individual would receive only the news that might interest them. Like all of us back then, Negroponte suffered from an excess of optimism. He couldn't foresee that this *personalization* of news consumption, as with products, would only reinforce ideological bubbles through self-segregation. In 2004, we defined this phenomenon as *tribalism* in articles like "The Mental Borders of Tribalism."[447] In 2012, an educational PowerPoint from the NSA for its employees (leaked against their will) included the following question as a headline: "*Which country doesn't want to make this world a better place… for itself?*"[448] The three most hypocritical ellipses in human history, needless to say, and an obvious statement for a well-known Anglo-Saxon pathology shared with other cultures, but not with the rest of humanity.

Ironically, algorithms not only show the news that might interest the reader-consumer, like the products in ads, but they can also anticipate months or even years ahead the future interests of each individual,

[clv] If billionaires like Donald Trump or, perhaps in the future, Elon Musk run as presidential candidates, it is not because the real economic and financial power needs that circus, but because of their own personal egos.

whether because they can predict a *maturation* or a *natural and spontaneous change* but, above all, because both algorithms and artificial intelligence, by anticipating events, can change them by altering the opinions, sensibilities, and tastes of future consumers, as if it were a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Now let's move on to the big business of personalized propaganda and manipulation. For the 2016 elections, Cambridge Analytica was hired by various American right-wing politicians, who paid hefty sums for the service, while Cambridge Analytica's shareholders donated money to their clients. All expressed their high level of satisfaction with the service. Cambridge Analytica, working with data stolen from Facebook users, managed to create voter categories ranging from "Soccer Mom" to "Working Parents" to personalize political offerings (each speech in each town had a special, very local flavor), exactly as happens in the marketing of other products.[449]

As mentioned in the previous chapter, George Creel, the director of the Committee on Public Information (CPI) in 1917, had created a squad of thousands of employees called "*Four Minute Men*" to sell World War I in the United States. Without neglecting the significant role of Hollywood celebrities in shaping public opinion, Creel knew that the average citizen was easily influenced by anything that felt personal, such as the opinion of a neighbor or a colleague at the bar.

The fragmentation and personalization of propaganda is a relatively new phenomenon. During the 19th and 20th centuries, newspapers, radio, and television published general advertisements for products that might interest a small segment of the population, such as women's items for a specific group of women or medical instruments for a minority of professionals. This issue was resolved in the digital age with the personalization of advertising.[clvi] But to target an ad to a small number of interested individuals, it is necessary to identify and locate those individuals. This is how the multitude of free services emerged in exchange for the extraction of consumer data: tastes and weaknesses, purchasing power, and place of residence.

Political advertising operates with the same tools but in a slightly different way. The most effective approach lies in the *personalization* of the offer, in making the consumer feel heard and understood. As in the

[clvi] After losing the sale of copies as the primary economic resource, the traditional press lost one of the few revenues that came from readers: the publication of classified ads.

commercial market, in the political market the voter (the consumer) must feel like a victim with a solution from someone who speaks directly to their heart. They must feel that there is someone who understands them, and that is the candidate, the party, the sect, the tribe that will protect and save them or, at least, alleviate their anxieties and frustrations. In other words, the old principle of the drunk at the tavern who speaks to our heart, the *Piano Man* by Billy Joel.

In 2008, the Republican candidate for the U.S. presidency, John McCain, began speaking to Joe the Plumber. Joe existed (Samuel Wurzelbacher),[clvii] but his character was more real than Joe himself. His rival, the rising media star at the time, Barack Hussein Obama, was not far behind. In every mass speech, he recounted how someone, with a name and marital status, had told him, "*Barack, I couldn't fill up my car's tank today*." That is, little Joe suffering from a need and an obsession shared by all the Joes and Marys of the country: the price of fuel. The stories in speeches and debates appealing to small, concrete characters are not only a classic of journalism and political advertising-propaganda but also a knee-jerk reaction of Protestant culture, which cannot grasp abstract ideas or collective responsibility but instead relies on biblical stories of individuals named John and Noah, who give a face to an invisible God. This is why magazines like TIME need to put a face on their covers and choose one as "Person of the Year."

In traditional politics, appealing to the voter's emotions (first fear, then hope) makes all the difference between the winner and the loser, a tradition that, like everything else, has seeped into Latin American politics. In this sensitive nerve of politics, social media has an even greater advantage. Traditional media can spread a character like Joe the Plumber, someone who resembles the average voter, though not everyone. Social media, on the other hand, with its astronomical database, technology, and experience in using it only for potential buyers, can speak to Joe the Plumber about the arrogance of candidates with PhDs and to David the Soldier about how unfair society is to those who sacrificed themselves in

[clvii] Wurzelbacher became famous on October 12, after questioning Obama about a potential tax increase (in the United States, electoral issues are few, and taxes, along with guns and foreign terrorism, top the list of popular grievances). In reality, John was never a plumber, though he said he wanted to be one and taxes prevented him. He never started his plumbing business, but, taking advantage of his media luck, he became a professional commentator in favor of the Republican Party and a fanatical defender of guns.

some war on the other side of the planet to defend their country's freedom (if the campaign is against the Obamas and in favor of the McCains); it can talk about the price of PVC pipes, how little clients pay for a repair at 7:00 PM, the rising cost of beer (if Joe is a beer enthusiast, something that is easy to know from his supermarket purchases), how poorly the law treats divorced fathers (if Joe is divorced), or the unjust theft of medical care from poor women with four children (if Mary has only one or is a successful single professional).

Social media propaganda is like a Don Juan who woos multiple women by telling each why she is unique.[clviii] This technological mechanism of social engineering has only radicalized old politics. Similarly, whoever has more money to pay for such manipulation will win the elections. In those same 2008 elections, the two competing candidates spent $1.6 billion, a third more than in the 2004 elections. By the 2016 elections, that figure had increased to $6.5 billion, and by 2020, it reached $14.4 billion. More than the entire economy of some African or Central American countries.

In Mexico, anti-PRI activists were demobilized on platforms like Facebook, just as the Kurds were in Turkey, without the administrators of these platforms doing anything to stop it, as these practices are legal and increase their customer base. The personal databases created by these social networks allow anyone who can purchase their services to target specific groups with their political and business interests, such as Blacks, Latinos, Whites, young people, old people, men, women, fat or thin, attractive or unattractive.

The same goes for war. According to Woolley, "*sites like Facebook or YouTube became battlegrounds in a divided Syria. Armies of bots on Twitter harassed dissidents*" of the Bashar al-Assad regime. The tools included social networks, political bots, memes, spam, and videos. According to the FBI, "*Syrian hackers managed to hijack websites and social media accounts of prominent U.S. media outlets*." However, al-Assad's adversaries were not far behind in similar practices.[450] According to Daniel Kreiss and Shannon McGregor, "*tech firms are motivated to work in politics for marketing reasons, advertising profits, and building a network of relationships to serve lobbies [...] moreover, Facebook, Twitter, and Google go beyond simply promoting their*

[clviii] President Donald Trump's Twitter account wrote 40,000 tweets in just a few years, which amounts to a form of "mass personalization" of political messaging.

digital advertising services; they actively engage in influencing political campaigns…"[451]

Once verifiable facts in favor of an option are not enough to achieve the desired goal, the traditional recourse of inventing facts is employed. Or, as President Trump's advisor, Kellyanne Conway, defined it in 2017 to defend a false claim, we can consider "*alternative facts*." By 2022, the giant Google, through its advertising service, Google Ads, was the main revenue channel for thousands of websites dedicated to producing fake news. In English-speaking countries, this Google-sponsored misinformation reached 13 percent, but in Latin America, it reached 28 percent, and in countries like Brazil and Turkey, it exceeded 80 percent. At the same time, Google benefits from these sites specialized in the misinformation market.[452]

The globalized ego and the freedom of the mass-individual

WHAT APPLIES TO CANDIDATES AND PRODUCTS applies to voters and consumers. The technique of personalizing the offer, whether in physical, cultural, or political products, takes *communication* to extremes never before seen since societies ceased to be family clans. However, as in a large cosmopolitan city like New York, as in any airport, as in the myth of the Global Village, the great cultural and ethnic diversity leads to the illusion that we know the Other better when, in reality, what has been globalized is not the knowledge of the Other but the *ego* of each individual. *We do not live in a Global Village but in the Globalization of the Self*. Each Ego is the center of the Universe, and each of its parts, the other egos, are measured and valued in relation to my own ego, to how they relate to me, whether they are for or against my ideas, that is, my self. Even the body, though it remains a dominant object of production and consumption, does not achieve the transcendence of ideas (usually simple enough to fit in a Tweet) that represent my tribe and, above all, me.

This psychosocial mechanism dismantles the foundations of any democracy. *It demobilizes* and, consequently, makes the individual easier to manipulate. Beyond their fears, their own and particular desires, the globalized self, lost in the ocean of other egos, is offered a general

framework that gives a sense of unity to the chaos with basic concepts like *family*, *tribe*, *homeland*, and a contradictory, fictitious but unifying guest: *freedom*.

At the same time that it passionately opposes any form of collectivism, individualism becomes pure mass, like grains of sand turning into a handful that one hand lets slip over the other. In a democracy, there is a certain idea of *individual freedom*, which is an abstract concept, often a superstition, but in any case a universal aspiration. Frequently, this "individual freedom" is manipulated by right-wing ideologies, by conservative liberalism, and by neoliberalism, starting with the very hijacking of the word *freedom*, even when it was practiced under multiple military dictatorships in Africa and Latin America. Now, because the ideolexicon *neoliberal* became filled with negative experiences, its semantic content was transferred to a new ideolexicon: *libertarian*—always resorting to the abuse of the same hijacked word.

References to *freedom* are obligatory since, by the mid-Renaissance and especially with the Enlightenment, it ceased to be, as Saint Teresa said, "an instrument of the devil." But all this ideolexical smoke hides the fact that freedom and liberalism, freedom and libertarianism, individual and individualism are not the same thing but their opposites. Moreover, in a democracy, the individual renounces individualism, at least in part. The individual gives up part of their egotism and the famous "beneficial egoism" of economic liberals for the benefit of a group, a society. They cannot give it all up, because then they become a fanatic of political systems like Maoism, Nazism, fascism, capitalist consumerism, and the various religious and political sects of today. But by giving up part of their ego to the group, they establish a dialogue, a negotiation of meaning and purpose for both the group and the individual.

Different now, the globalized self does not adapt to the group but demands that others adapt to its ideas, which are never its own ideas, but it lives them as if they were, just as it lives its prison as its own choice, that is, as an exercise of its freedom. The globalized self is a consumer who demands that the seller immediately satisfy its whims, which it considers the truth revealed by a mysterious mechanism that it does not even understand and for which it calls *facts*—thus, in italics.

It is the culture of warring tribalism, but without the communal humanization of the pre-capitalist tribe.[clix]

The logic of elections

JEAN PAUL SARTRE SAID THAT IF IN THE WORLD there are two heads that think alike, it is probably a mistake. The diversity of ideas and existential preferences is one of the most basic human conditions. But social power tends to be a pyramidal structure, and at the apex, there is room for only one, whether the tribal chief, the pharaoh, the king, the emperor, or the president. How is this contradiction resolved between human reality and social power, which, ultimately, is the result between winners and losers?

By this logic, the beautiful diversity sooner or later reduces to a dichotomy, to a struggle of antagonists, and then it must be simplified for the sake of victory in the dispute. The complex diversity is simplified like an army or a soccer team in a final. For this, faith in a narrative becomes central until the multiple options disappear with a single and perhaps reasonable goal: to win, to prevail.

Let us jump a few millennia to the most current electoral systems of what we call "liberal democracies." This enormous diversity must be reduced to two parties. Always two. Always a pair, because power (at least the bureaucratic administration of power) does not accept being shared. As if the dichotomy were at the root of the deepest problems of the human species, more or less resolved by the unity of a god or an ideology that, in turn, creates its opposite, by the needs of those relegated from power and even by the need of power to exercise and justify itself in the struggle against the opposite—the representative of evil.

One of the most important dichotomies planted in the historical debate since the Modern Age was the false dichotomy *freedom vs. equality.* The simplistic idea that, like a pandemic, inoculated the minds of billions of individuals across the planet, assumed that the struggle for *equality* destroyed *freedom* individual. This prevented the more just and reasonable

---

[clix] Majfud, Jorge. "The Slow Suicide of the West [El Lento Suicidio De Occidente]." *Monthly Review*, 2006.
Majfud, Jorge. "Las Fronteras Mentales Del Tribalismo." *Voltaire Net*, 6 Sept. 2004.

idea of "equal freedom" from even being considered. It also prevented the consideration of a widely practiced dichotomy: *freedom vs. security*. Although we all want to secure both, freedom and security, the history of the fanatics of *security* has been ruthless against the defenders of *freedom*. The natural process was to hijack both ideo-lexicons, monopolized by a tiny social class, whose enemies were those below, those who questioned or challenged them. To protect their *freedom* (private), those at the top specialized in exercising *security* against those at the bottom. Both aspirations were hijacked, creating a new dichotomy: us vs. the enemies of *order* and *freedom*.

Thus, often the pairs of opposites (feudalism vs. monarchy in 16th-century England) orbited one another until they merged like two stars to create new pairs of opposites with their respective gravitational forces (liberals vs. communards in the 19th century).

Companies and corporations

The hijacking of democracies

In 2015, during one of the meetings with "the troika" (the ECB, the IMF, and the European Commission), the then Minister of Economy of the new Greek government, Yanis Varoufakis, presented a request for a substantial renegotiation of the so-called "Greek economic program" and demanded the return of some economic sovereignty for his country. The German Finance Minister under Chancellor Angela Merkel, Wolfgang Schäuble, warned him: "*It is not allowed for elections to change the economic program of a member state*." Later, other members from other EU countries tried to soften the warning: "*Yanis, you must understand that no country can be sovereign today. Especially a small and bankrupt one like yours*."[453]

The similarities of the current dominant system with others that preceded it, such as feudalism, slavery, and colonialism, are, by far, much greater than those perceived by the population through the media. Realities change much less and much more slowly than the discourses that create and conceal them. The proudly called democracies of the 19th century were not only rooted in the slave system but also required that, to vote or be voted for, citizens had to be property owners.

The excuse back then, and in a more concealed way today, is that only those with material interests have any sense of responsibility. The idea of *responsibility* is the wildcard of politicians who, over the last generations, have won elections on the left and governed on the right. The condition of private property also transmuted to continue dictating the convenient policies of the owners. But not just any owner, as today private property is almost universal in our capitalist world, and even a poor worker organizes his life around that reality, only his capital is a car and a house, which he usually finishes paying for just before retiring. Often, not even that. The

property-owning elite that once decided elections, first by law and then by money, is now the corporate and financial elite. As in the 19th century, elections are bought by millionaire donors even in the most powerful countries that present themselves as great democracies, such as France, England, or the United States, where there is a symbiosis between political democracy and economic dictatorship. As if that were not enough, the global economic system is even more tyrannical, as it does not even have a political system that can threaten it with any limits. The closest thing to a global political system, the UN, is a toothless dog dominated by the criteria, whims, and interests of the victorious powers of World War II.

Another current reality is an even older inheritance. Today's corporations function like medieval fiefdoms where the lords, owners of lives and lands, divide the kingdoms whose crowns, their governments, can do little to limit their power. In some cases, platforms like Facebook or Twitter have become global fiefdoms where their hundreds of millions of inhabitants live, consume, produce free content, conduct transactions, get informed, and are exposed to the news decided by the rules of the kingdom governed by a single man, be it Mark Zuckerberg or Elon Musk with their court of CEOs, administrators, and "moderators." These global fiefdoms are the private property of a handful of men who take no orders from their servants and are certainly not elected by them.

This is merely the radicalization of a tradition that, since 2007, has led to 90 percent of Wall Street's capital being controlled by three investment groups known as The Big Three (BlackRock, Vanguard, and State Street alone hold $22 trillion in capital, equivalent to the GDP of the United States).[454] But corporations are also involved in drafting legislation, serving as major donors to candidates from the two perpetually feuding parties, thanks to laws and judicial decisions that, for example, in 2010 removed the cap on corporate donations (through Super PACs) under the argument that it violated freedom of speech (*Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*). Ironically, the Supreme Court case in favor of large corporations was brought in the name of an "independent organization" called *Citizens United*, even though the citizens of this country were opposed to Citizens United's proposal. In countries like Argentina, corporate and union donations were also prohibited, while individual donations were limited. This changed in 2019, although donations must still be made public, a problem the U.S. electoral system solved with secrecy.

As we have detailed before, and according to various academic studies, virtually the entire political system, including legislators, presidents, and judges, is either in favor of or under pressure from major corporations. But this power is not confined to the national borders of the countries where they are legally registered. Their power extends in various ways to the rest of the world, both financially and legally. We have also detailed cases of judicial extraterritoriality, such as the one in 2018 that affected Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou.[clx]

Thanks to laws passed under pressure on governments, both domestic and foreign, private corporations enjoy immunity and even sovereignty—far more sovereignty than sovereign states themselves, as they can sue governments but cannot be sued by them. Thanks to their financial power, countries trapped in the web of debt and the need for development, perpetually interrupted by the Northwestern superpowers, go to extreme lengths to attract their investments and then keep them happy so they don't leave. Like the free trade agreements that these same corporations get governments to sign without public knowledge (and whose negotiations are only revealed when there's a leak, such as WikiLeaks in 2013), they often establish near-absolute freedom for invasive capital, giving them maximum extortion power: when they feel like it, they enter a country, and when something displeases them, like a right won by workers, they leave without warning, devastating the economies of both large and small countries.

Any form of regulation that limits this "freedom of investment" to ensure stability for captive countries is sabotaged as a threat to "freedom" and the "free market," typical of failed communist countries, etc. Even the World Bank, whose stated purpose is to be a "*development bank*" for countries "*supporting underdeveloped nations with loans*," not only lacks development experts in its leadership but also works for financial speculators, demonstrating that, in practice, its true goal is corporate business and the protection of big capital. Regularly, the World Bank publishes rankings of countries based on their docility toward transnational investors—one of

[clx] On December 1, 2018, Meng Wanzhou, an executive at the Chinese telecommunications company Huawei and daughter of its founder, was detained in Canada while in transit to Mexico by U.S. agents on charges of doing business with Iran, in violation of U.S. laws… She was later accused of fraud and acquitted in 2022, the year she was able to return to her country. ("The True Financial Fraud." *Rebelión*. Majfud, Jorge. 2019: rebelion.org/el-verdadero-fraude-financiero/)

the many global rankings dictated by the North according to its interests and from which the Global South must free itself. Its main publication, *Doing Business*, alerts speculators in real time whenever a country deviates even slightly from the corpo-feudal dogma: in South America, the congress of country X has passed a bill recognizing a labor right; in Africa, country Y faces popular protests against the friendly dictator N; in Asia, a survey suggests that 60 percent of the population of Z supports banking regulation; etc. Countries with minimum wages or corporate taxes are ranked low on this index of freedom. With a whisky in one hand and a mouse in the other, investors move their capital from one country to another, generating "market panic" in countries X, Y, and Z, while their local politicians explain the crisis as a result of "the lack of market freedom" and, as the writer Mario Vargas Llosa often says, for "not being on the right path" and "not voting correctly" in favor of freedom, development, and capitalist prosperity, which, if it has stood out for anything over four centuries, it is in promoting the wealth (development) of colonialist powers and the death and misery (underdevelopment) in colonized countries.

Keeping public opinion within certain limits is convenient but not a necessary condition. If the people's opinion contradicts the interests of corporations, the politicians, indebted to fortunes in donations, favor their donors. Then the press will take care of lecturing the citizens and convincing them that it was for their own good. Or it will simply distract them with some war, with some dispute over someone else's sex and family, or with entertainment programs that ensure a safe amnesia until the next elections.

In 2014, professors Martin Gilens of Princeton University and Benjamin I. Page of Northwestern University analyzed data from over 20 years of legislative processes to answer a very simple question: "Does the government represent the people?" [455] In their exhaustive study, they found that the laws passed in the U.S. Congress ignored or went against the will of the population in the bottom 90 percent of the income scale. In other words, if on a political issue the people outside the top 10 percent of the wealthiest were in favor of an option, the legislators passed the law that went against this opinion. The same study identified the most influential sectors and their donations: Pharmaceuticals $2.16 billion; Energy, $2.93; Defense $1.26; Finance $3.29; Agribusiness $1.21; Communications $3.50… "*In just the last five years, the 200 most politically active companies in the United States spent $5.8 billion to influence our government through*

contacts and donations to politicians' campaigns. Those same companies received $4.4 trillion in tax benefits, which means a return of 750 times their investment. They invest billions to influence the U.S. government, and in return, we give them trillions."[456] The rest of the donations from millionaires and corporations goes to propaganda for public consumption and to wash their guardian angel robes. Starbucks, for example, made charitable donations to the poor in Kenya while being accused of paying poverty wages to coffee growers. Coca-Cola did the same in Guatemala, resisting sugar unions. In a tweet on April 23, 2023, Elon Musk boasted to writer Stephen King: "*I donated $100 million to Ukraine, how much have you donated*?" [457]

This logic did not originate in the United States, but it is here where it developed and was projected to the rest of the world. It will suffice to consider just one example among hundreds. At the same time that Washington was tightening the embargo and rhetoric against Cuba, Disney executives sent Henry Kissinger to China to convince the government to give them a free pass to their gigantic market. Finally, a consensus was reached: Disney would maximize its profits in China while committing not to produce anything that would discomfort the communist government.[458]

In history, almost nothing disappears overnight, not even through a sudden world war like World War II or the conquest of the Americas against pre-Columbian cultures and civilizations. It is no coincidence that the rise of private corporations emerged at the same time as the slave system was abolished in law. On March 11, 1889, former President Rutherford Hayes already denounced that the U.S. government had become an instrument of millionaires and large corporations: "*Money is power. It is power in Congress, in the states, in city halls, in the courts, in political conventions, in the press, in churches, in education—and the influence of money is growing ever greater* (…) *The problem lies in the great wealth and power in the hands of a few unscrupulous individuals who control the capital. In the national Congress and in state legislatures, hundreds of laws are passed dictated by the interest of these men and against the interests of the workers… This is not the government of the people, by the people, and for the people. It is a government of the corporations, by the corporations, and for the corporations*." He then warned: "*Excessive wealth in the hands of a few means extreme poverty, ignorance, vice, and misery for the many… If the people were properly informed, if they could understand the problem, they would surely seek a solution… One*

solution would be, for example, to pass laws that regulate the power of corporations, their properties… the taxes they pay."[459]

Following the tradition of *economic liberalism-social conservatism*, by the late 19th century, the slave system was continued by the first liberalism and despite the second. Before roles changed again in the next century, it was not the (economic) liberals but the conservatives who initially opposed the growth and domination of private corporations, calling it a "*return to feudalism*." In his book *Rogue States*, Noam Chomsky summarized it as follows: "*The conservative critique* (and) *John Dewey, the leading social philosopher of the United States, argued that democratic forms have little substance when 'the life of the country' (production, commerce, media) is governed by private tyrannies in a system he called 'industrial feudalism,' in which workers are subordinated to managerial control, and politics becomes 'the shadow cast by big business over society'.*" In reality, Dewey "*was articulating ideas that had been common currency among workers for many years. The same goes for his call to replace industrial feudalism with a self-managed industrial democracy*."[460]

Gradually, corporations began a process of metastasizing their ideology and dogma into the rest of the political power first and popular beliefs afterward. In the early 20th century, during the period historians call the Progressive Era (1896 to 1917, especially due to new social and anti-imperialist movements), it was not the progressive politicians but the conservatives who opposed the Supreme Court's decision to recognize corporations as legal persons. Almost simultaneously, one of their public arms, the Federal Reserve, was created without the control of the people.

Some conservatives considered this step a return to medieval feudalism. In reality, they were not only correct in its effects but also in its origins: the word corpus itself derives from the Latin for body, and during the Middle Ages, various interest associations were recognized as persons with rights. Among them, the church. But the new imperial corporations, like the British East India Company, became private enterprises with legal personhood.

In 1886, the Supreme Court decided that corporations were protected under the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, which had recognized a few years earlier that Black people were also citizens. If Black people are citizens, why not corporations? In 1917, it was prohibited for corporations to donate to political campaigns. Its promoter was Democratic Senator from South Carolina Ben Tillman, a white supremacist,

paramilitary enthusiast, and advocate of lynching free Black people, as well as an opponent of women's right to vote. At the time, racists were at an economic disadvantage compared to their enemies in the industrialized North. But, as our model of Inverse Progression indicates, the sides would switch again by the end of the 20th century, and the staunchest defenders of the freedom of money in politics would be the conservatives, now Republicans. The ultraconservative Black judge, champion of the fight against gay and lesbian rights in the 21st century, Clarence Thomas, opposed the Tillman Act, considering it motivated by interests against corporations that, in the early 20th century, sympathized with the cause of Black people and reformers. In 1976, it was recognized that investing money in politics was part of "freedom of speech" until, in 2010, the Supreme Court abolished the donation limit based on the same argument. All decided in contradiction to public opinion, which, at least in this case, had not been convinced by prior propaganda.

In the 2012 election campaign, the Republican candidate, businessman Mitt Romney, responded to a public criticism about citizens' rights by stating: "*my friend, corporations are people too*."

The irony lies in the fact that these corporations, recognized as persons, possess more capital than many countries and, according to the new laws passed under the influence of their own lobbies, can sue sovereign nations while being protected with immunity from being sued by those nations, because in practice they are sovereign individuals who make decisions above the countries where they have economic interests.

This near legal impunity not only protects them from trials and lawsuits in dependent countries but also prevents any form of popular control through the opacity of their operations. As private companies, they maintain the right to secrecy and unilateral decisions. The problem lies in the fact that these are not small businesses, like a pizzeria or a mechanic's workshop, but giants that possess more financial power than many countries, in addition to the legal power we've already seen. The trade agreements, euphemistically called "free trade agreements," are free only in the sense of the freedom of the executives and major investors of these corporations. Transparency, the foundation of any democratic and popular control, is conspicuously absent.

After the crisis of the 1980s caused by the mass slaughter of pigs in Haiti, demanded by Washington to prevent a possible outbreak of swine fever from the Dominican Republic, rice became the most important food

and market product in the country. By 1990, two-thirds of Haiti's economy depended on rice. In 1994, as a mythological formula of a non-existent free market, Haitian rice farmers were ruined en masse when the IMF and President Bill Clinton forced them to eliminate tariffs on rice imports. The agreement benefited rice farmers in Arkansas, the president's home state, but it ruined the modest rice farmers in the island nation, driving many, in desperation, to throw themselves into the sea in search of work in other lands. Many would drown in the Caribbean waters and be forgotten by the developed world. Those who reached the United States were seen as the living and perpetual example of corruption, unproductivity, and a lack of understanding of market freedom.

Almost simultaneously, the NAFTA treaty was signed between Canada, the United States, and Mexico, linking the idea of freedom with the reduction of tariffs for the free flow of exports. The promise was that this market freedom would lower product prices and generate prosperity on both sides of the borders. It was no secret that the border still existed, and after the treaty, it became even more impenetrable for human beings, especially for the poor, who are never welcome despite the law of supply and demand moving them from one country to another and despite all the laws trying to prevent it. The result was strictly the opposite of what was promised. The price of corn, the staple of food and the economy in various Mexican communities, ironically increased as a result of the importation of cheaper corn from the United States. Logically, due to the destruction of local production, a capitalist and imperialist tradition that has lasted for centuries. The price of tortillas doubled in a few years. In a decade, nearly twenty million Mexicans fell into poverty thanks to the blessings of the free market. Childhood malnutrition left its mark on at least one generation. Two million Mexican farmers were forced to abandon their lands, which, as a century earlier during the liberal and privatizing regime of the Porfiriato, fell into the hands of the wealthiest landowners, many of them foreigners. Illegal immigration to the United States exploded, and those who couldn't cross rented themselves out in the border maquiladoras for starvation wages. As always, women were doubly victims of necessity: as exploited workers, as domestic servants, as sexual victims who, in not a few cases, were used and discarded in some pit. The same old, familiar, lucrative business for those at the top. In a decade, nearly twenty million Mexicans fell into poverty thanks to the blessings of the free market.

According to the idea of national sovereignty, states could not be taken to court. The global regime of corporations changed this inconvenience of "sovereign immunity" until it reversed it. Not only did they manage to sue sovereign states, but they also established themselves with immunity rights through "investment immunity" clauses. As Jason Hickel aptly summarized, "*corporations have the power to regulate democratic states, rather than the other way around* [...] *corporations have the right to take sovereign states to court, but these states do not have the same right to sue foreign corporations; the most they can do is advocate for the dismissal of the lawsuit, but they cannot sue for damages*."[461]

The same right of immunity protects institutions that operate as transnational dictatorships, with zero participation from any people, such as the World Bank and the IMF, no matter what catastrophe they have caused in one or in dozens of countries. When a legal dispute arises, the deliberations are conducted in total secrecy, and the judges who arbitrate are lawyers from private corporations.

The two most recent free trade agreements are known as TIPP (United States and Europe) and TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership), which are similar to NAFTA but cover a larger geographic area, the latter in the Pacific Ocean basin. The treaties, negotiated in secret, do not merely consist of a reduction of tariffs, which are already very low, but rather the extension of corporations' rights to do as they please. There's a reason it's secret. The terms of the agreement, signed behind the backs of the peoples of the Americas and Asia, include limitations on labor rights and environmental rights while deregulating banking practices.

As Hickel aptly observes, "*the most concerning thing is that we only know what these treaties consist of due to a leak*."[462] Exactly the same and only reason we know about some massacres carried out by the armies and civilized drones in some distant country in the 21st century. Only representatives from 605 companies had access to the terms of the agreement. In 2015, a portion of the TPP agreement was leaked, thanks to which we know that the draft agreement included the elimination of regulations on food safety, health, and the environment.

In the United States, various manifestos signed by dozens of economics professors protested against this abuse of private corporations over sovereign countries. As summarized by Juan Fernández-Armesto, the president of Spain's National Securities Market Commission, "*three private individuals are granted the power to review, without any restrictions or appeal*

procedures, all government actions, all court decisions, and all laws and regulations emanating from Parliament."[463]

In 2005, the Canadian company Pacific Rim sued El Salvador because its citizens voted to prohibit gold mining in their communities to preserve their rivers. The $315 million lawsuit, protected under the CAFTA free trade agreement, was for "lost profits." The same happened in Ecuador with Occidental Petroleum, in Peru to avoid lawsuits for the poisoning of children in La Oroya, and in Uruguay, where the government's audacity to ban cigarettes in public spaces led to a lawsuit by the tobacco company Philip Morris based on Swiss laws, the country where the company is legally headquartered. Vermont's socialist senator, Bernie Sanders, summarized it this way: "*the tobacco company Philip Morris sued a small country like Uruguay because it wasn't allowed to freely exercise its freedom to kill its youth*."[464] On one hand, they are individuals with rights, and on the other, they are sovereign states that decide over semi-colonial countries where they have economic interests. In all cases, they are perfect transnational dictatorships.

In a century, if civilization survives the climate catastrophe, our descendants (including intelligent machines) will view this era of capitalist and corporate tyranny as we now view the slaveholders of the 19th century.

Successful examples of neocolonialism

BASED ON THE STUDY WE DEVELOPED in this book, we can see that the particularity of the so-called Asian Tigers, including communist Vietnam (recurring examples in the neoliberal propaganda of The One and its scribes), lies in their position within a global financial system that rewards some and punishes others in selective and varied ways. All the theories, the "five-minute explainer videos," and media sermons that extol the miracle of these countries omit the role each part plays in the whole, each individual, each country in the current global system—which, as we've seen, doesn't differ much from the system inherited from previous centuries.

As we saw in earlier chapters, global capitalism loves slaves, whether they are *chattel slaves* (privately owned slaves), *indentures* (term slaves), or wage slaves (flexible human resources). The contemporary

Asian Tigers are merely four countries, two dedicated to finance due to their strategic geographic and transit positions and their ideal time zone location for the eternal continuity of global markets (Hong Kong and Singapore); the other two are manufacturing hubs (South Korea and Taiwan).

The first two are micro-republics that, like other micro-republics or virtual republics, serve ultra-liberal financial capitalism but have central governments that play a decisive role in the economic process. Apart from their well-known medieval laws, their authoritarianism, and their strong interference in the country's macroeconomic design, the government of Singapore owns 90 percent of the habitable areas and participates in more than a third of the country's major companies.

The same goes for the other two manufacturing tigers, with the particularity that the latter, Taiwan and South Korea, are receptacles for technological investments. London and Wall Street need manufacturing slaves in countries without mineral reserves. That is, they need these countries to have an obsessive and enslaved production for the export of electronics, for example, while also having an education system above the global average—of course, a culture and education molded to utilitarianism, the commercialization of life, and, above all, the interests of global financial centers.

The mass export of high-tech products (following the massive investment of capital and the reason for the "economic prosperity" of these neocolonies) compensates for the mass import of these products by the financial centers, that is, the consumer countries, such as Europe and, above all, the United States. If they had raw materials desired by the center, as is the case with Africa and Latin America, their education would be as depressed as their investments: as history shows, the less educated the population of extractive countries, the cheaper the labor, the more authoritarian and classist their society, and the more obedient the masses who suffer this condition for the benefit of the local oligarchies and their partners, foreign capital and corporations.

The main administrators of investments, money production, private and international banks, and the transfer of surpluses from productive countries to the hegemonic country with the largest deficit in history (the United States) continue to reside in the current imperial centers and, above all, continue to benefit, first and foremost, The One, the international oligarchy, that tiny club of men who dominate global finance and opinion—though, of course, never absolutely.

The rest of the countries in the Global South are divided into two types of colonies: (1) strategically indebted economies with raw materials and (2) the world's factories with surpluses, without natural wealth but with abundant labor, a high level of utilitarian education, that is, equally enslaved. To illustrate this, it is enough to study the living conditions of workers in Hong Kong or South Korea. Not even the UN Development Index is capable of considering these qualitative factors, focusing instead on easily quantifiable factors, such as education (without clarifying what type), health, and per capita income. China, due to its demographic particularity, has managed to place itself in a third category; it is neither a colony of the system nor yet the center of a financial empire benefiting from the vampirization of the rest of the world, as has been the history of imperial capitalism.

In the past, industries were in imperial metropolises like London and New York. Now they are in the "financial industry," also in London and New York.

Fascism and Liberalism

AFTER THE MIDDLE AGES AND THE RENAISSANCE, Western liberalism was an unforeseen consequence of the demands of feudal lords first and the bourgeoisie later against the absolute power of kings. Once the ancient regime of monarchies was eroded, the debate and conflicts between monarchists and liberals continued in various forms depending on the country and the era. The liberals, victorious in this dispute, faced a problem, a consequence of their own success: What to do with the liberal democracies they had defended against the monarchies? Clearly, the ideas, books, and speeches threatened the new triumphant elite with the demands of those below, the workers, the people, the *demos* who demanded their share of *cracy*.

It is at this precise moment (late 19th century, early 20th century) that propaganda emerges and consolidates as an instrument of freedom, organized and scientific. Thanks to propaganda, amplified by new communication media (propagation tools, such as the rotary press in the mid-19th century and radio in the early 20th century), those who held an overwhelming advantage in their control made possible the dream of Stuart Mill, the founding fathers of the United States, and any liberal from the

late 19th century onward. Thanks to propaganda, broadcast from the financial power centers of the West, active social and popular organizations like American industrial unions were easily demonized, and their demands hijacked, as was the case with the Chicago martyrs (1886) or the New York martyrs (1908). The former were neutralized with the abstract "Labor Day" in September, and the latter with "International Women's Day," which in its beginnings was "International Working Women's Day." Another ideological hijacking and neutralization typical of cultural propaganda. The demonization of workers (just as the demonization of slaves during the period of slavery) reached the roots of popular culture, as my friend Ariel Dorfman demonstrated in *How to Read Donald Duck*(1971): in Disneyland, neither parents nor workers exist, and when they do, they are criminals, as is the case of the only worker who appears, "The Wolf," who unjustly threatens the vast fortune of Uncle Scrooge. We enjoyed those stories as children.[clxi] The goal of historical minorities in power, from feudal lords to financial lords, is none other than to remain in power, and for that, they need a legitimizing discourse. Centuries ago, in the West, that discourse appealed to the legitimacy of God. Today, especially after the Enlightenment and the success of liberalism, that discourse centers on other arbitrary concepts, such as meritocracy *or blatant contradictions like* freedom *and* democracy.

In theory, fascism and liberalism are opposites. However, decades ago, neoliberalism (economic) managed to combine a diverse menu into a single package. Thus, in the same party, you could find the most radical capitalists and warmongers alongside Christians who had nothing to do with the Jesus of the Gospels, but rather with Judas, someone who could sell out his own friend for thirty pieces of silver. Thus, defending Jesus meant defending the merchants unjustly expelled from the temple, forcing the damned camel through the eye of the damned needle, and supporting the empires that crucified other rebels. The lords of money, the corporate boards that spread banana republics across the world and legalized dictatorships in their own countries, all in the name of freedom and

[clxi] In 2009, one of my African American students at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania told me that both Barbies and Walt Disney stories should not be politicized because they are stories for children. Precisely because *they are for children* (as any religion should know), they are of crucial proselytizing importance for the indoctrination of future generations, both those who enjoy certain privileges in the imperial nation and those who reside in the colonies and neo-colonies of the so-called, disparagingly, underdeveloped world.

democracy, as in the times of slavery, managed to unite the two opposing ideologies. The neoliberals of the latter half of the 20th century are today's libertarians and drink at the bar with neo-Nazis and neo-fascists with complete comfort.

One of the moguls of neoliberalism, along with his friend Milton Friedman, Friedrich von Hayek, visited Pinochet's Chile several times and recommended the new Chilean model to Margaret Thatcher. Like Friedman and like Harberger, Hayek decided to abandon the principle of democracy and turned it into what it always was for many: an excuse and a tool. "*I prefer a liberal dictatorship to a democracy that does not respect liberalism*," he declared on April 12, 1981, to *El Mercurio*, the newspaper of Agustín Edwards, a key figure in the boycott against Allende and a favorite of the CIA for decades to plant its editorials.[465]

One of the icons of liberalism, John Stuart Mill, believed it was necessary for the votes of the upper classes, property owners, and the educated to be worth more than those of the common, vulgar classes. The founders of American democracy thought no differently, and, not by chance, this is reflected in the electoral system, where one vote can be worth half or double another, depending on the state in which it is cast, and the structure of legislative powers that persists to this day, such as the electoral college and the disproportionate power of sparsely populated states in the Senate.

Liberal democracies have been hijacked by the ideology of capital, by the dictates of corporations, and by the secret decisions of powerful intelligence agencies. Liberal ideology has reduced the people's right to govern themselves according to their own interests to the right to vote. The right to universal suffrage does not equate to having control over the economy and, consequently, control over the social narrative. Because having a right is one thing, and having the possibility is another.

Fascism, Collective Narcissism, and the Fear of Freedom

PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH ON NARCISSISM in recent generations has not reached a clear conclusion. Perhaps because all of it, while seeking to understand a collective phenomenon, focuses on the study of individuals.

The discussion is less ambiguous when, for example, we consider the new media that economically benefit from "the globalization of the self," even if it is as fleeting as a soap bubble, represented in obsessive practices like *selfies* and the sharing of personal and irrelevant facts, something absent in previous generations except for starlets and a few celebrities. If before an event in the neighborhood wasn't real unless it appeared on television, today the experience of happiness from a trip or the birth of a child isn't real (or isn't complete) unless the individual shares it with the entire world. Thus, as community relationships disappear, the narcissistic ego dissolves in the mirror of an anonymous, non-existent community.

There is a popular understanding that in both communism and fascism, the individual disappears. Paradoxically, the narrative is the opposite when it comes to capitalist individualism. But individual and individualism, like freedom and liberalism, are not equivalent but rather opposites. Neofascism has more to do with the latter. Let's see.

In *Escape from Freedom*, Erich Fromm proposed in 1941 the idea that the individual escapes uncertainty by renouncing their freedom and placing it in the hands of an authority or a belief. For example, Calvinist predestination as a solution to the instability created by capitalism. This has been a common practice for millennia: the individual places their faith in a prophet or a religious system and thus calms their anxiety about the possibility of making a capital mistake, whether in this world or the next (we touched on this in *Critique of Pure Passion*, 1998). Similarly, ritual, as opposed to festivity, is the need to impose *order* and *predictability* in an unpredictable and out-of-control world. The fascist obsession with the past is also the fear of the future in an unstable present.

Current psychological studies do not consider collective, tribal narcissism (neofascism), which, in any case, never transcends national borders because it is defined by its need to combat an antagonist that poses a threat to the existence of its tribe. Hence its recurring obsession with symbols and rituals: flags, shields, slogans, oaths, tattoos, initiation ceremonies, salvation ceremonies, shouts, gestures, and all kinds of primitive, non-verbal language. After all, we are still primates who fell from the trees.

The greatest expression of collective narcissism in history is nationalism. In its origins, it was not as defined by borders as it was by ethnicity. Later, as a collection of ethnicities, by religion. All peoples founded on nationalism defined themselves as chosen by their gods. The most well-known in Western tradition is the Hebrew people and, more recently,

modern empires, from the British to the Manifest Destiny of the United States during its territorial expansion in the 19th century.

This collective narcissism worsens in times of crisis, as happened in Europe a century ago: economic instability, wounded pride, and the propaganda of new media formed the perfect and necessary triad for the cyclical resurgence of fascism. Fascism needs to look to the past and see mythological events that never existed or were magnified as saintly, heroic, and grandiose. It is the psychology of instability and fear in search of the solidity of a past that is easily manipulated by desire and propaganda.

Today, radio propaganda has been replaced by digital media propaganda, by social networks. While in principle fascism is not ideologically consistent with capitalism, let alone classical liberalism, both capitalism and liberalism have once again married fascism, just as they did before with imperialism. It is the awareness of national decline, of the loss of symbolic privileges, like that of an impoverished worker or a beggar proud of their empire.

Now, if we consider the relationship between the two hardest facts of today's reality—on one hand, (1) the rise of fascist and nationalist far-right movements, and on the other, (2) the hyper-concentration of capital and financial power in a handful of groups and individuals—it is reasonable to conclude that the popularity of fascism is not necessarily consistent with the hyper-accumulation of wealth under capitalism, but it is *the best way* to block any questioning of that reality, demonizing and crushing any criticism and, above all, any political or social alternative that threatens it.

The concentration of capital is not only a foundational characteristic of capitalism since the 17th century but, like any other previous system, it is also a concentration of power. Money is not innocent, especially when accumulated in the global hegemonic center, where it amasses more wealth than many entire countries.

This wealth must be protected and expanded, and to do so, it needs political power. It needs to manage the laws and the most powerful armies in the world at the international level, as well as local armies at the national level. But this political power, whether in democracies, semi-democracies, or traditional dictatorships, needs to control public opinion, both to elect obedient candidates behind a histrionic mask and to prevent massive social protests.

This is where the relationship between fascism and the media is established. The dictatorship is perfect. While social media platforms

dedicate one percent to paying salaries and make a billion people work for free for a few feudal lords, the *users-used* do so happily, feeling that they have freedom and post whatever they want. They feel that their habits and ideas are spontaneous, not inoculations from a dictatorial system.

The root of the problem lies in the structure of wealth accumulation, and the consequent and convenient production of fear, desire, and dissatisfaction, one of the most prolific industries of the current capitalist system.

There are two options to this order: (1) the hyper-accumulation is progressively reversed, and the political, social, and ideological landscape changes radically, or (2) a total civilizational crisis occurs (economic, social, ecological), and humans are forced to adapt and survive on the ruins of a system until they find another way to start over.

The first option, the gradualist one, is too rational for a self-complacent mentality. That is, it is the least likely. The second, the most painful, is the most common in human history. That is, the most probable.

Low tech

After September 11, 2001, many analysts pointed to the advantages of *low tech* (low technology or unsophisticated technology) to combat a technologically overdeveloped world. However, at least in this regard, Al Qaeda and ISIS belong to opposite worlds. For some time, the proselytizing and strategic success of ISIS was based on the high digital technology of its numerous members and volunteers from the Millennial generation.

It is impossible for humans to compete with future bots and reality creators equipped with Artificial Intelligence. It would be like asking Olympic swimming champions to compete with dolphins in the open sea. In the future, the struggles (if not wars) against the financial and technological elite, and possibly later against artificial intelligences independent of humans, will take place in the realm of Low Tech. That is, the more primitive the means of communication (a sheet of paper) and the forms of thought (a face-to-face conversation in some corner of a mountain or a desolate beach), the more effective. The more primitive the means and tools of resistance or contestation, the freer and, therefore, the more powerful.

Since prehistoric times, the creation and control of public opinion have always been crucial for the ruling power. What is the difference in our time? The difference lies in the fact that billions of individuals around the world are armed with the instruments of domination, resistance, and liberation. Politically speaking, this is like walking a tightrope: on one side, the total manipulation by a powerful elite; on the other, the liberation from those same powers with special interests.

For this very reason, the importance of traditional armies will dramatically diminish, making way for the shadowy and invisible manipulators on one side and the rebel hackers on the other.

VII. Is another world possible?

Possible and inevitable

Civilizational model change or extinction

EVERYONE KNOWS THAT A FIREWORKS SHOW is coming to an end when the discharge of gunpowder intensifies. As we have seen, capitalism and the market are not the same thing, although capitalism has commodified human life. The capitalist market is not the free market but a dogma that justifies the extraction and concentration of wealth by a tiny ruling class; it cannot manage the economies of its own countries, let alone its own externalities and the social and ecological problems it has created. The destructive and anachronistic dogma of unlimited GDP growth emerged in the 1930s but is a consequence of the very nature of capitalism, which develops and survives by vampirizing humanity with the goal of maintaining perpetual capital accumulation, from the expulsion of peasants in England in the 16th century, through the massive destruction of its imperial colonies in Asia and Africa, slavery in the Americas, wars, and dictatorships of all kinds around the world, to debts and the permanent blockade of any society that does not align with its arrogance as masters and lords of the world. Currently, we are consuming 60 percent more than the planet can sustain without ecological damage. The planet has the capacity to allocate the production of 1.8 "global hectares" for each of its inhabitants. Guatemala consumes 1.8 hectares per inhabitant, but developed countries in Europe require 4.7, and the United States and Canada reach 8.[466] At this moment, we are already in the sixth major extinction of species on the planet. The last one occurred 66 million years ago due to the impact of a giant meteorite.

In 1995, in a conversation with Carl Sagan, biologist Ernst Mayr stated that it is unlikely that humans will last much longer as a species, since, due to our intelligence, we are a lethal mutation. On the other hand, the average lifespan of a species, out of the billions of species that have

existed, is about 100,000 years, which is roughly the amount of time modern humans have existed.[467] The optimism of Mayr's critics at the time has almost disappeared today. Not only has the catastrophe of climate change moved from being a mere "conspiracy theory," and the powerful propaganda of corporations associated with oil and consumerism is no longer as effective in the face of overwhelming evidence, but in recent years a second threat to the human species has emerged, at least in the collective consciousness. Not only is human intelligence "a lethal variation," but, as if that weren't enough, its greatest novelty is an artificial variation that will soon become a new nature: artificial intelligence, which is not just a warning from philosophers and novelists but from those directly involved in its business and development.

As an example, consider the collective warning from 130 engineers and CEOs of OpenAI, Google DeepMind, Anthropic, and other giants, cautioning that future systems could be as deadly as pandemics and nuclear weapons, representing a real "extinction risk" for the human species.[468]

Both the scientific warnings about the climate catastrophe were already known during the 60s and 70s, as well as proposals like the need to rethink the myth of "unlimited growth" and the dangerous fallacy of measurements like GDP. In 1972, a collective called the Club of Rome proposed establishing limits to economic growth.

It is possible that we are in this stage of capitalism's hegemony, which does not mean that a collapse similar to the Soviet Union in 1990 will occur, which, like its birth in 1917-1922, was more the result of decisions by a minority than the historical process of a system that fades away and is, slowly and progressively, replaced by another, as history indicates in all cases and as seems to emerge from Marx's own writings.

Capitalism is still the dominant system and, probably, will be for a few more generations, but it does not and never has existed in a pure form. In fact, capitalism benefited from feudalism, first in Europe and then in the colonies under its imperial and extractive power. Moreover, capitalism would not have been possible without the parasitization of non-capitalist spaces, of regions that remained under feudal and absolutist regimes, such as colonial or neocolonial dictatorships.

From its birth in 17th-century England to a couple of centuries later in the same Europe, capitalism had to coexist with the remnants of feudalism and the subsequent monarchical absolutism. The Russian

Revolution was a leap from feudalism and tsarism to state communism (one of the many variations of communism) with almost no passage through capitalism, except for a few decades of a very minor bourgeoisie. The same can be said of Latin American feudalism in the 20th century, which, by the way, proves that the order of systems experienced in the dominant center of the world does not necessarily have to be reproduced in the periphery.

In its need to accumulate and monopolize, this dominant system still coexists today with the feudal system, just as it coexisted and benefited from the slave system until the 19th century. It is enough to recall the development of the cotton textile industry in England thanks to the expansion of slavery in the United States over vast territories stolen from Mexico, even though England had outlawed the slave trade.

Feudalism still functions in regions like Africa and Latin America. For centuries, creole and foreign landowners have taken care (and still do) to keep a population sufficiently removed from a minimum education, free from social sermons and media propaganda, which could not only make cheap labor more expensive but also multiply conflicts through greater class consciousness, a greater awareness of the social injustice to which individuals and peoples are subjected for the benefit of their creole elites and their main partners in the global hegemonic center (strategically called the "developed world").

But feudalism, the first known enemy of capitalism, is not its only assistant. One of its fiercest critics and adversaries, born from the Industrial Revolution in Europe but known for centuries in other colonized regions of the world, is socialism, in its various versions. Apart from its all-powerful media and cultural propaganda, the success of capitalism and its very existence are due to the fact that it takes the profits from its risks and leaves the social problems derived from its success to socialism: public schools, state health services, state social security systems, national banks that always appear to save large corporations in crisis, national or international armies (like imperial exercises) that, from the State, take care of "correcting the system's imperfections" by invading, pressuring, and extorting other non-aligned countries, etc.

When some of the public programs or enterprises fail, the failure is blamed on socialism or the "inefficiency of the public enterprise." When capitalist enterprises fail (something that happens every day) and are not saved by the State because they are not powerful enough, their failure is

called "creative destruction." This idea is one of the most recurrent among apologists of capitalism to explain what Marx considered a weakness of the capitalist system: its permanent and cyclical crises. Joseph Schumpeter took that same Marxist critique and turned it into a virtue, basically by changing the name: the crises that leave workers on the street and their children malnourished are actually moments of "creative destruction." In other words, the periodic crises inherent to capitalism are not ´only a weakness of the system but are represented as a strength. In fact, culturally and psychologically, it has been naturalized in the global population so that each new crisis is received as a natural phenomenon, like an earthquake or a hurricane against which not much can be done except to resign oneself and wait for it to pass. But economic and, above all, financial crises are in the DNA of capitalism from its birth, as we saw in previous chapters, with the invention of variable income in the 17th century, which liquidated the stability of the previous system (feudal and, in some cases, communal) with the promise that it is an instability (an insecurity) that produces more wealth and, in the long run, benefits all of humanity. Only the first part is true, in the same way that the slave system created wealth that few systems could match—only not for the benefit of humanity but for the masters and, to a lesser extent, the rest of the upper social class. Today, for example, the most stable social systems like retirement and healthcare are constantly pressured to be privatized, thereby losing their reason for being: to be secure. For instance, when retirement savings are invested to increase profits, the security of these savings is not increased; rather, they are put on a tightrope. In some cases, when things turn out worse than expected, it is the State that comes to the rescue of those affected. Capitalism is a system that is constantly playing with fire, and when a fire breaks out, it is those at the bottom who get burned. For an historical absurdity to remain popular among its victims, as slavery once was among the enslaved, a hegemonic system must shape ideas, beliefs, and sensibilities, from the religious to the artistic. Capitalism, like other dominant systems of the past, has proven to be relentless in this regard. Capitalism corrupts from the individual mind (the producer, the consumer, the happy slave) to human and international relations (empires, massacres, dictatorships), simplifying human existence to the extreme, reducing its existential purpose to the pursuit of monetary gain.

Of course, it is not the companies or the powerful corporations that take care of the population to prevent them from starving while

waiting for the benefits of the new *capitalist creation*, carried out by the heroic *entrepreneurs*(risk-takers)—those whose risks, when things go wrong, are always supported by the State they so despise.[clxii]

In the logic of business, their *success* is always short-term. No one thinks or organizes a business to reap benefits in a hundred years. Not fifty, not thirty. Maybe ten or twenty years, but even that is nothing in historical and planetary terms. To make matters worse, there is also no business that aims to benefit society, much less humanity, but rather the business owner or the board members or, worse, the abstract cause of "the firm." In any case, the long-term consequences of any successful business are not considered by its executives. If any of us were the CEO of Pepsi Cola, our main goal would not be the health of the consumers but the increase in the company's profits. The same if we were the owners of some fancy cattle ranch in the Amazon. In any case, not knowing how to play the game is deadly. Deadly for the existence of the business. Knowing how to play the game too well is also deadly. Deadly for the planet and the rest of humanity.

This is where the core of the existential problem of the 21st century lies. The solution, the system that replaces destructive capitalism in the name of progress and well-being, has not yet been conceived. Not even imagined. It will likely resemble the demonized collectivism, a way of organizing societies more like the ancient natives of the Americas did and less like the European conquerors did. A more austere system that manages to save humanity from environmental catastrophe and, without halting human progress in science, technology, and social thought, reduces the obsession with consumerism and the depression of the world of things. A system that does not impose austerity on those at the bottom but rather on those at the top. A system that has the courage to eliminate the historical abuse of the super-rich who have hijacked everything (capital and moral narratives) and achieve a more reasonable balance between average consumption and the planet's possible resources.

But Paradise is dangerous. Over time and with the development of technology and reasonable social policies (that is, *radical*), we could reach

[clxii] In fact, for Schumpeter, who emigrated to the United States and became a professor at Harvard, the very destruction of capitalism would be due to its own success. A kind of martyr system. Again, a rewriting of Marx (the elimination of government, communism, would follow the dictatorship of the proletariat), but with apologetic words for capitalism.

a moment in history when Humanity could ensure the satisfaction of basic needs for all inhabitants of the planet. In fact, we are not that far off. At this very moment as I write these words or you read this book, the world has the capacity to feed and provide medical coverage to all its inhabitants. If even in the richest and most powerful country in the world, the United States, this is not a reality, it is not due to a lack of means but to a lack of dominant policies, dominated by the limitless ambition of those who possess a disproportionate amount of power due to their obscene accumulations of capital.

All this has, at least, two solutions. One more civilized and reasonable and the other entirely painful: (1) a transition to a universal wage, the distribution of the production of robots and Artificial Intelligence, and the redistribution of the wealth accumulated by the psychopaths who have hijacked entire nations in the name of *freedom of enterprise* or (2) a violent rebellion that ends this social and global order before we can find or mature the new laws of a new civilization.

Capitalism is dying, but it will outlive us all. Naturally, here we enter the realm of conjecture and futuristic speculation. We won't dwell on it too much, but we cannot fail to mention it.

All attempts and all successes in avoiding fake news, lies, and, in a word, *propaganda*, will always be partial and limited. If we can even speak of any success in this struggle, it is clear that the winner is the puppeteer, not the hypnotized audience watching the puppet. Propaganda is not the origin of lies, the manipulation of ideas, or the shaping of a society's sensibilities, but rather a tool of accumulated social power. In our time, the economic, financial, political, cultural, and military system has led to a situation where seven men possess as much wealth as 3.8 billion inhabitants of the planet (that is, half its population), and just three of them have as much as half the population of the richest and most powerful country in the world.

To rescue language is to rescue consciousness

IN THE AUSTRAL WINTER OF 2023, during one of my talks with Víctor Hugo Morales at the *Caras y Caretas* theater in Buenos Aires, I took the opportunity to emphasize the need to rescue language, especially ideo-lexical

terms hijacked by neoliberals (now called libertarians and, paradoxically, supporters of past fascist dictatorships) such as *freedom*. These ideo-lexical terms determine the key to interpreting social narratives. Shortly after, in a dialogue with Boaventura de Sousa Santos for a Colombian channel, I insisted on a similar problem: when critics of NATO say that the war in Ukraine only benefited the United States, we are once again assuming that the corporations that own almost all the money issued and accumulated in that country are the United States. But look at its people. If in the 1950s it benefited from the destruction of the rest of the world (excluding Blacks, Latinos, and poor whites), since then it has slid down a economic, social, cultural, moral, and psychological slope. Tent cities in the richest states; every year, a hundred thousand deaths from drug overdoses, forty thousand deaths from firearms alone, half the population in debt, a hopeless youth, growing social and political violence, a decline in infrastructure, public school closures due to lack of money and teachers, while hundreds of billions of dollars are sent to a new war.

A new war that will be lost, like all the previous ones, not only because the richest and most powerful army in the world hasn't won a war in generations but also because, I suspect, losing wars is part of the business: if wars were won, the business of war would be lost.

That is, even Americans are victims of a fanaticism instilled by the media and the sermons of their stewards. But if anyone dares to say it, they are labeled "anti-American.".. That is precisely the fear: that anti-imperialist critics tell the truth: "*actually, no, gentlemen; we are pro-people, including the American people; we are doing them a favor, one that the sycophants will never do*." To rescue language is to rescue consciousness.

In the West, to a large extent, the indoctrinated patriots who accuse others of indoctrination are Christians. In the name of Jesus's unconditional love, they strike. Even if we didn't consider the Gospels, with their focus on love for the weak and persecuted, with their condemnation of moral and religious arrogance, it would be enough to glance at the most violent Old Testament, so often quoted by the senile right. There we will find nothing resembling private property or the free market, even though one of Javier Milei's ideological models is Moses. In the Old Testament, "prophet" only meant someone who dared to tell a people what they didn't want to hear. Like Amos, they criticized their people for the greed of the rich and for the social differences that were considered signs of

corrupt societies—one of them was crucified two thousand years ago for the same political reasons.

The patriots with swollen jugulars love their countries but hate their people. I define myself as anti-imperialist, but I am neither capable of loving nor hating any people as a whole. How can someone love or hate three million strangers? Imagine loving or hating 340 million...

History also shows that the so-called freedom of a society exists because of its critics, not its tattooed patriots. It's true, universities around the world are flooded with leftist criticism. So is culture. It has always been this way. Well, for the right, there's a solution: start studying, you fools. The problem is that if someone loves money, they're unlikely to dedicate themselves to such things, which they themselves have defunded. As Octavio Paz said, the right doesn't have ideas, it has interests—and when it doesn't have interests in the stock market, it compensates with a lot of ad hominem hatred.

Crisis and Post-Anglo-Saxon Civilization

A CIVILIZATION IS BASED ON A socioeconomic system, as in the past before the last dominant system, capitalism, it was feudalism. When one of its components, whether the economic system or the cultural value system, changes, the civilization begins to change.

Capitalism, especially Anglo-Saxon capitalism, is dead. Its system and power structure have nothing to do with the centuries in which it reigned with brutal force. If we don't see it, it's because we see everything through the lens of the recent past and because, in fact, capitalism persists as a zombie, just as feudalism persisted for most of the time that capitalism dominated as a paradigm. We are in the same moment when capitalism was born in the 17th century. Two systems coexisting, one in decline and the other on the rise.

Although at this moment of capitalism's agony and death, the alternatives are not yet clearly visible (did John Locke even call *capitalism* the era that had already begun almost a century earlier?), we can observe that the shift of the geopolitical and economic center from the Anglo-Saxon world to China and other secondary centers will imply, more than an economic system change, a change in the distribution of geopolitical

power and, consequently, a cultural paradigm shift that will have effects on the psychology and dominant philosophy in other regions—including the Anglo-Saxon region. In this case, the shift will be from the materialistic, utilitarian, individualistic paradigm of Anglo-Saxon capitalism, likely to a model closer to Confucian or Buddhist philosophy. That is, less consumerist, which is precisely what the battered ecological system desperately needs. In this way, the shift of the civilizational center from East to West will continue, following the path of the sun, initiated thousands of years ago—only now the West on the other side of the Pacific Ocean is, once again, the East.

Aside from the United States' own crisis in the 21st century, the shift in the geopolitical center will serve as an example that "another world, other ways of thinking and living are possible," which will facilitate an inevitable revolution in culture and the socioeconomic system within the United States itself. Something that for more than two centuries would have been impossible to imagine will happen in this century we are living in. Hit by social degradation, by the loss of global privileges (from the geopolitical, economic, financial, and dollar-based monetary), by the burden of debts from previous generations, and by the dissatisfaction of a life dedicated to a goal of material success that will be revealed as a failure, the new generations will bring about a radical change in their conception of society and, above all, of existence. Is the production and accumulation of wealth the supreme goal of an individual who will die in a few decades? What is the point of being the "number one" in the world? What was the point of former President Andrew Jackson, in 1845, agonizing from diarrhea that was leading him to death, until his last breath being so worried about stealing California from Mexico…?

Questions that until today have been taboos will be put on the table tomorrow. And the answers will not be the ones given today by the overwhelming majority of Americans, blinded by the corporate propaganda of a financial elite but also by a fanatical mentality that combines Jesus with Mammon like coffee with milk. A materialistic, supremacist fever, of winning at any cost even if it means killing thousands or millions and losing one's life in a blind enterprise that functions as a neurotic distraction.

As an old saying goes about the vain possibilities of the optimism of our time: "*when we think there's a light at the end of the tunnel, it turns out to be another train*." It's true that when it comes to human beings, there

aren't many reasons to be optimistic, but there is always, or there should always be, room to imagine a better world. So, perhaps hope, which sometimes kills, sometimes helps us live and even makes it possible for us to keep fighting for a way out of our problems.

For example, it is possible that the new civilization will shift the paradigm of war and the oppression of others toward a time of greater peace and collaboration. A civilizational change centered on the individual, on selfishness above all else as summarized by Ayn Rand, could be replaced by a more Asian, more Confucian, more Buddhist, more Indigenous American approach focused on communal values, less materialistic, less belligerent in pursuit of a single absurdity called money—*capital,* in the language of today's powerful.

After all, after so many centuries of violent history, it wouldn't be a bad idea to replace the philosophy of the eagle and the bear with that of the panda—a species that seems to be the happiest in the world. Without idealizing, both nature and those beings detached from it, humans, we need a new perspective, a new civilizational paradigm. It is not a contradiction but simply a paradox that the new needs the old, as being original means going back to the origin. This new-old is represented by Eastern philosophies like Confucianism. Something that, like the native philosophies of the American continent or various African cultures such as Ubuntu or the pacifist tradition of the long-lived Kingdom of Nri, is demonized in the post-capitalist West as socialist or communist. To some extent, they are, but this new-old must create a culture and a civilization less fanatical than the brutal capitalist civilization, which, in its fanaticism, has managed to colonize even the very idea of freedom and progress through oppression and misery—both economic and human.

A post-dollar world

IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS, WE DETAILED HOW the mere ability to print and invent dollars from the keyboards of major commercial banks functions as a vacuum for resources from around the world. This unjust order cannot be changed in a couple of years, as the amount of dollars in public and private coffers around the world is astronomical. Some economists have suggested that creditor countries of the United States should forgive its

debts to free themselves from the debtor. What seems like a paradox is not so absurd if we consider that after the conversion of the dollar into a fiat currency, Washington's hegemony was based on its power as a debtor, not a creditor, as in the past.

For this to be possible, the countries of the Global South must become independent of financial institutions under Washington's tutelage, such as the World Bank and the IMF, as well as other international institutions like the World Trade Organization. The most logical option lies in the creation of independent financing banks for countries outside of NATO.

All of this will likely take longer than people imagine today, after not imagining any change in reality, even as these changes are always underway. This is because the future is always, or almost always, a projection of the most recent years, and it does not account for turning points, violent reactions, or disruptive novelties. When people imagine the future and even the current state of the world, sometimes that image lags behind reality and sometimes leaps ahead.

Power structures, colonization of the future

WHEN THE CENTER OF GLOBAL POWER, when hegemonic countries began to lose their extractive capacity from their empires, they began to consume domestically the violence they could no longer export. This export of violence not only guaranteed them a domestic catharsis, a unity that made deep internal contradictions and divisions invisible, but it also provided them with astronomical resources and wealth through plunder and extraction, whether through their governments or private companies, as we've seen since the 16th century. But this colonization of other countries, later translated into recolonization through their sovereign debts, now weakened, continued with the colonization of their own future through their own debt. In the last twenty years, the debts of Europe and the United States have multiplied several times over. As we've seen before, this is possible due to the ability to create two global currencies, especially the dollar, out of thin air and thus transfer surpluses from countries like Germany and China or the production of raw materials from indebted countries around the world, which must produce something to buy dollars to pay

their debts. Also, because, at least for now, the United States will not be invaded by any creditor country, as Washington did with its "dollar policy," deliberately granting loans it knew poor countries could not repay, only to later use them as an excuse for invasion and the subsequent creation of protectorates. The massive debts of Europe and the United States are almost irrelevant for now, but they will not be for future generations, especially when the U.S. and England have lost their hegemony and control over global finances. Then it will become a problem for the new generations of these countries. In other words, we are colonizing future generations to continue extracting wealth out of thin air.

Now, what can a generation of young people, increasingly aware of the climate catastrophe and their indebtedness, do? Very little, for two reasons. First, because the progressive abstraction operated by capitalism since the 17th century, separating politics from economics, has made it impossible for a rebellion to decapitate power by decapitating the king or the ruling class, as could be done in the French Revolution. The concentration of capital became increasingly abstract when the gold standard (in the U.S.) and silver standard (first in Spain with the peso and later in Britain with the pound sterling) became untouchable, with the inconvertibility of dollars to gold in the 1930s in the U.S. and then globally, with the end of the Bretton Woods system in 1971. Still, money remains something tangible, like a stack of bills. Not long ago, someone could walk into a bank, rob it, and leave with a haul of millions of dollars. Today, if a robber tries to steal something from a bank, they'll have to settle for a chair, a computer, and a few coins. 97 percent of money is digital. To steal it, one would need control over the system that creates it out of thin air with the press of a key. This radical abstraction has produced as much money as ten times the value of the global economy, and it is concentrated in the hands of a club as small as a financial sect.

The same can be said of the power of repression. Both the militarized police (especially since neoliberalism) and the military force of superpowers rely on high technology and a global structure of armaments, such as their eight hundred military bases around the world. What group of rebels could storm an aircraft carrier? Only another military power, like China, could do it, and not without the risk of escalating into a conflict that could destroy the economy and civilization itself. But every superpower has its Achilles' heel. In the United States, despite its budget equaling the economies of several countries, and the excess money allowing

them the luxury of saying that billions of dollars sometimes go missing without explanation even to Congress, their blunders are legendary. The Pentagon not only has a dismal record of defeats against medium and small countries, but any teenager can steal crucial information from them. Not to mention the multibillion-dollar secret agencies like the NSA and the CIA.

The Difficult Exit from the Labyrinth

IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO SOLVE A CENTRAL PROBLEM of any democracy without eroding its structures of accumulated power. It is not possible to aim for democratization in any area of society when power is concentrated to the extreme, making any participation akin to that of slaves on a 19th-century plantation or African and Latin American miners in the 20th century, no matter how successful the plantation or the mine is or how benevolent its owners are.

In our time, and as the Athenians knew 25 centuries ago, social and geopolitical power derives from money. In other words, there is no possible solution to the chronic ills of Western democracies without true "citizen control" of governments and, above all, of the untouchable corporations. There is no possible control by citizens, by free humans on the planet, without a real redistribution of the income derived from social and historical production.

Is there any approximate example of this control from below? Yes, though imperfect. One case we've already mentioned is the massive editing of articles on Wikipedia, which, even in a state of near-perfect anarchy, has achieved greater independence and a closer approximation to the facts than any other encyclopedia.[clxiii] Another example could be the academic system, where the greatest controllers and most feared critics of research and its results are other specialists in the field. Another example, though

[clxiii] The paradox of Wikipedia is that, being a reasonable representative of a functional anarchy that does not depend on big capital or a for-profit corporation, once developed, it has made the emergence of any other competitor impossible. For an alternative to Wikipedia to emerge, technology would have to develop a Metapedia, in which the user could enter the virtual space of the "article," that is, approach a physical experience of an event like a war, the construction of a pyramid thousands of years ago, or the Crucifixion of Christ, as we elaborated in the story "The Age of Barbarism" (1995).

traditionally shrouded in suspicion, would be electoral systems where all contenders, external observers (international), etc., participate.

A similar case is that of "open source" systems like Linux, which are more protected against espionage by governments, secret agencies, and large corporations. They are more reliable and independent than a major media outlet for two reasons: like Wikipedia, they are more independent in their creation and self-regulation, and also because they are free. When an error or a secret attack on the system occurs, the "*white hat community*" (ethical hacker community) acts in a reasonably fast and effective manner.

In the specific case of media, one solution involves considering them as structures and "*utilities*," which is why governments of countries, in coordination, should at least regulate and audit them, as is done with any university, rather than leaving them to the whims of private corporations and mega-companies, all in the name of a freedom that only applies to the owners of these economic powers.

In fact, the development of a country depends on the development of its structures, such as highways, airports, electrical grids, legal systems, and the internet. All or almost all functions of governments or non-private administrations. With the questionable exception of the internet giants, despite not being their inventors but their captors (as we saw, undemocratic bastions of this century). "Entrepreneurs" are fuses, and where there isn't one, another will inevitably appear—not to change the world, not even a country, but to respond to a social, economic, and ecological demand of the moment.

Cyborgs and Artificial Intelligence

THE GREATEST DANGER OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCES does not lie in them being robot dictators, global rulers, or merciless soldiers like the one portrayed by Arnold Schwarzenegger in the movie *The Terminator* (1984). That is, anthropomorphic robots that we can see and touch, like Sophia and other more humanized and attractive variations. No, those will be companions, substitutes for semi-robotized humans, cyborgs, who cannot listen, understand, or have sex with other humans dehumanized by the consumerism of things and sensations.

It's not about that, nor about any traditional dictatorship replaced by machines. The greatest power of artificial intelligence lies in its invisibility and, even more, *imperceptibility* and, in not a few cases, *incomprehensibility*. It won't just be about physical bodies, metallic or silicone, something we can see and touch, but the opposite. This non-Darwinian evolution (by intelligent design, not of a god but of humans) will produce inorganic beings that interact with humans in a way indistinguishable from human interaction through digital and information networks. In fact, we've had examples of this reality that will come to dominate humanity for years now. If currently bots, social networks, and Big Data centers are used to manipulate public opinion by other humans, the step toward their independence is much smaller than humanity imagines at this moment… Not only is it small, but it will be imperceptible—like the moment when an exhausted person transitions from consciousness to their first dream.

This reality of a global government in the hands of Artificial Intelligence is already in full development and practice. I'm not just referring to *companion bots* or the promoted and still very primitive consultation tools like ChatGPT. Consider that the current masters of the world, who manage more capital than the entire global economy is worth, have for years entrusted these virtual tools with the game of investments in the world's largest stock exchanges, such as London and Wall Street. If this is what they do with what they most desire and treasure, their own capital, imagine what they will do with human masses—mere numbers and abstract equations.

In the long term, we can speculate that in a dystopia where artificial intelligences displace humans in controlling the world and their lives, it would have the same effect as an extraterrestrial invasion with beings as perverse as humans but more intelligent or, at least, with more technological power: it would be the first moment and the only way in which humanity would unite against a common enemy. Today, humanity already has common enemies, such as poverty and climate change, but the global micro-class in power still benefits from those enemies, which is why there is no global unity or significant change. As long as there are short-term benefits, future losses don't matter. Social changes only occur when the losses are short-term or happen in the present.

A global catastrophe due to climate change and the loss of control over artificial intelligences would return us to our human condition. A

more animalistic, more human state. It won't be the ideal dreamed of by humanism.

Sociopolitical Systems

BEING AN IRREDEEMABLE SKEPTIC IN MATTERS OF politics and society, I cannot adhere to any magical formula. Much less to a political party or ideology. For the same reason, ever since I attended primary school in Uruguay during the extreme right-wing dictatorship and witnessed the contradiction between actions and rhetoric firsthand, I have always distrusted official narratives and, even more, social myths and dominant narratives. This, logically, in a world dominated by capitalism and its propaganda machinery, has positioned me toward what is commonly understood as the *left*—though I consider the dichotomy of *those above* and *those below*, also simplifying, to be at least more realistic.

Even so, I struggle, or cannot, blindly subscribe to any ideological formula. On the other hand, any member of a society with an ethical sense cannot help but feel compelled to take part and take sides in the concrete situations they face, such as voting for "the lesser evil" and publicly supporting them to avoid a historical shift in the opposite direction. Thus, it should come as no surprise that I consider the current model—capitalist, neoliberal, neofascist, and neofeudal—as one of the worst evils humanity faces. To combat it from our discipline (dialectics, intellectual work), the best approach is to contribute the perspective that contradicts the dominant dogma. That dogma which presents itself as the historical solution and claims all credit for any human progress, despite having been, in fact, the exact opposite.

Setting aside the fact that the dominance of the international market has always been in the hands of capitalist powers, from the 1970s until recently, various academic studies, such as those by Cereseto and Waitzkin in 1986, show that before and after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the rise of neoliberalism, socialist countries showed better results in the overall health of the population than capitalist countries.[469] In 1993, Hugh F. Lena of the University of Notre Dame and Bruce London of Clark University, in a study on the impact of political systems on health, concluded that "*political systems make a difference in health and well-being*

independent of national economic factors (gross national product per capita) and international factors (investment dependency)."[470] More recently, in 2023, professors Dylan Sullivan (Macquarie University) and Jason Hickel (Autonomous University of Barcelona), after years of research firmly grounded in irrefutable data, concluded, against the dominant narrative, that the track record of efficiency in improving social welfare was more on the side of socialist countries than capitalist ones. Without overlooking the fact that many socialist countries, and even more so, communist experiences, include catastrophes, they emphasize that all of these were due to the authoritarian nature of the leader at the time (such as Mao's China, which produced the famine of the 1960s, causing the deaths of millions), something that is neither a principle nor an exceptional characteristic of socialism. To understand this, one need only glance at the famines and massacres of hundreds of millions of people under the capitalist regimes of the Northern empires. As we have seen earlier in this book and published in other media over the past decades, these numbers are not an exaggeration. According to Sullivan and Hickel, "*it is clear that neoliberal policy has not achieved food security or human development for the majority of the world*." Based on data on mortality from malnutrition and levels of violence (and without mentioning the determining factor of the long economic blockade), they argue that "*Cuba has demonstrated that a more effective approach is to organize production directly around the satisfaction of human needs* (…). *Public supply systems have proven to be a powerful tool for poverty relief in many other countries. A 1986 study on health and education indicators found that, at any given level of economic development, socialist countries performed better than capitalist states in securing solid welfare outcomes for their population* (…) *The* International Journal of Health Services *found that high levels of democracy and strong leftist policies were associated with better health indicators. Public health researcher Vicente Navarro reached similar conclusions in his region-by-region analysis of health outcomes in capitalist and socialist states. In Latin America, Cuba performed better than most other states; in Asia, China and the Soviet Union had more robust welfare outcomes than capitalist economies like India or Turkey; and in the high-income countries of Europe and North America, social democracies with generous welfare states, including Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, outperformed neoliberal states like the United States*."[471]

Socialist families, capitalist societies

A FAMILY IN ALMOST ANY CULTURE resembles a Soviet-style socialist system more than a liberal capitalist system or its opposite, an anarcho-syndicalist system. Traditionally, the father (and more recently the mother as well) decides the policies of their household. The children's opinions may be heard and asked for, but they do not decide. For over two decades (millennia, let's say), parents provide everything necessary for their children's development free of charge: housing, food, healthcare, education, and even resources for leisure.

In modern societies, whether socialist or capitalist, some of these needs are covered by the state, such as education. Now, if the state provides the resources to cover these other basic needs, that expense of the parents is transferred to the state and is called communism, socialism, or, more moderately, social democracy.

Why wouldn't I agree that what I spend as a parent is done through the state? A liberal argument is that this harms the economy because taxes are always the devil, but various studies show that, when reasonably managed, the basic services provided by the state are more reliable and economical than those provided by private entities, since the latter are only driven by profit and, if they don't have much of it, there's no service. When they achieve oligopolies, prices skyrocket, as is the case with healthcare in the United States or various neoliberal experiments, such as water and other non-free but state-provided services in Latin America.

I believe the main reason is different and is not formulated in the light of day but buried in the ideological unconscious. If I provide all the advantages of the best education to my child, that will give them a competitive edge over all their peers and over all the other kids of their generation. Since the world is an ultra-competitive jungle, I won't hesitate to do it. My child first, naturally. But if the state is the one responsible for covering basic needs, then we would all have to compete on equal footing, without the privileges of birth.

The singular paradox of China's resurgence

IN RECENT YEARS, as could not be otherwise, the media, business class, and politicians of the United States invented their new enemy. This time without the racial, religious, and ideological disguises of the past. Now the great enemy, China, is bad simply because it is competition, and the mindset of big business desperately seeks to eliminate competition—if possible, in the name of free competition; if not, well, too bad.

Anglo-Saxon paranoia has never accepted that the world can be shared by other powers or by other ways of being, doing, and thinking. It has never stopped planning the suppression of competition using the old methods of the Cold War. For an imperialist mindset, any other is always unacceptable competition. Something that, as we analyzed earlier, was recently revealed with (1) the hasty exit from Afghanistan, (2) the gift of millions of dollars in military equipment to Washington's pseudo-enemies, the Taliban, (3) as a reserve force against Iran; (4) the reallocation of resources for a new strategic war in Ukraine, which was foreseen and precipitated with the strategy of blaming the enemy; and (5) the reactivation of the old claim of China over Taiwan, which was taken up by Washington before Beijing.

The old obsession follows all the patterns of the century-old Anglo-Saxon imperialism: we do not accept competitors; we do not accept disobedience; we will grow through media, military, political, and economic subjugation. No dialogues or negotiations that are not favorable to us. The world is a private business, and the strongest reserves the right to impose. Only we can win, even if it means dropping a thousand tons of bombs on some village or an entire country. There is only one model of success and one way of existence. The world is private property, and if it's not ours, it could belong to someone else. Etc.

Since the indigenous extermination, all these core interests have been justified by "the right to defend ourselves" against those we invaded; by the "fight for freedom" that our slaves and colonies didn't understand; and by the democracy and human rights that "the self-sacrificing white man" (Rudyard Kipling) had to bring to the rest of the world.

However, the history of the last few centuries shows that almost all the brutal empires that left hundreds of millions dead were proud (capitalist-liberal) democracies that, as if that weren't enough, dedicated

themselves to planting satellite dictatorships, when they weren't promoting predictable resistant and anti-colonialist dictatorships.

During the latest surge of the most radical capitalism, known as *neoliberalism*, the harassment by international banks under the hegemony of Washington, such as the IMF and the World Bank, imposed aggressive privatization plans on debtor countries without the capacity to resist, in order to expand the plunder of Northwestern corporations on the former colonies, now called the Global South. All these experiences failed painfully—not for the corporations, the banks, or the United States, but for the former colonies, from the privatization of water in Bolivia to Mexico, Africa, and any other example one might consider. Even in the United States, basic services like healthcare and education skyrocketed to the point of becoming unaffordable for the working class, due to the natural greed of large private companies that did, do, and will continue to do everything possible to maximize their core objectives: profits, not services. Imposition, not democracy. The well-known neoliberal game that triggered various crises in basic services, such as water in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, also reached the "First World," where the superior race knows how to do things.

The well-known neoliberal game that triggered various crises in basic services, such as water in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, also reached the First World, where the superior race knows how to do things, though now, almost without colonies, it begins to be part of that Third World they destroyed or, seen another way, begins to be part of a neocolony of its own private companies. According to the powerful liberal publication *The Economist* in July 2023, the catastrophe of water privatization in Britain 30 years ago was not due to privatization but to the lack of state regulation: "*the privatization of public water services in England and Wales, more than 30 years ago, now seems like a scam. Private equity firms have saddled some water companies with debt. That helped boost their profits but left them financially fragile. While many managers kissed like bandits, untreated sewage was dumped into rivers and beaches. The companies, particularly Thames Water, are now seen as the unacceptable face of Britain's public service privatizations. Critics, backed by voters from both the left and the right, are calling for renationalization... After the water disaster, consumers will end up paying more, not because of the unscrupulous CEOs of the water companies, but because of Ofwat, the weak and misguided regulator of the industry*."[472] Liberals.

When the Chinese dictatorship invested its surplus in Africa and Latin America, it was accused of imperialism. Of course, capital is one of the resources of imperialism, but the accusation comes from those who have practiced and continue to practice financial imperialism—apart from the centuries-old military brutality. Currently, Chinese companies are partners with transnational corporations like Apple and Tesla in the extraction of cobalt from Congo using slave labor. However, China still lacks the traditional resource of Northwestern, especially Franco-Anglo-Saxon imperialism, such as invasion and destruction by the force of thousands of tons of bombs, always in the name of freedom, democracy, and human rights.

China's historical background is also not as brutal as that of the Northwestern powers. At the height of its economic power, while it was the world's greatest superpower in the centuries preceding its destruction by the British Empire, for centuries the major conflicts in Asia were far smaller compared to those provoked by the West. In fact, the two largest invasions of one country by another in a three-century pre-Western period were due to Japanese intervention.

The West acted in the opposite way. Even before the birth of capitalism, its greatest energy was concentrated on religious fanaticism, from the Crusades to the Inquisition. Later, Anglo-Saxon capitalism emerged in the 17th century through forced internal displacements (*enclosure*) and continued with impositions, plundering, massacres, and wars across the Global South. This obsession with dominating others, with growing and prevailing through cannon and religion, was continued by the United States, which, from the very moment of its creation, was founded on slavery and the permanent and violent theft of land from its neighbors, whether Indigenous nations, Mexicans, or tropical colonies, and then continued with an unstoppable madness for invasion, imposing puppet governments through capital, secret plots, bombings, and media sermons.

The Chinese Renaissance was the result of two major factors. First, there is the geo-economic factor. The logic of Anglo-Saxon capitalist expansion when, since the 1990s, it needed to exploit an immeasurable supply of cheap labor in poor countries to increase the profit margins of Western corporations and further pressure the labor and redistributive rights of their own populations. This worked for a time, but it eventually backfired on the Anglo-Saxon mercantilist paranoia and the same need for control by capitalist elites who understood they were welcome in China

but could not dictate to the communist government as they had always done with Western governments. The easy manipulation of fragmented colonies, from poor raw material-producing countries, as in Africa, to microstates enriched but dependent on the financial empire, such as Singapore and Hong Kong, encountered a notable exception in China. Due to its demographic scale, its political centralism, its power of independence, and thus its development, it broke away from the Western imperial logic of the last few centuries.

Second, we can observe a powerful geopolitical factor. The dizzying resurgence of China over the last forty years was not based on military invasions, conquests, or regime changes in other countries, but on two fundamental elements: (1) strategic loans and the purchase of goodwill in other countries, and (2) capitalizing on the near-universal resistance to the imperialist history of the West, particularly that of the United States.

Geopolitics, geo-economics

AS IT CANNOT BE OTHERWISE, the transition to Post-Capitalism is full of capitalist elements, some radicalized, such as the concentration of wealth. With a distinctive feature of the entire history of capitalism: it is a *post-Anglo-Saxon capitalism* and, consequently, on the path to a different civilizational paradigm, that is, on a divergent path from the particularity of what we previously called "the new Anglo-Saxon man," internationalized in the 16th century with the privatizing obsession of nature and the commercialization of human existence. Above all, starting from the globalization of the power of private corporations, such as the East India Company and the multiple Anglo-Saxon corporations that invaded and colonized the world from Asia to North America, in different forms of enslavement and plunder, like the Virginia Company. Surely it is no coincidence that the flag of the United States is almost a copy of the flag of the British East India Company.

This transition phenomenon has placed emphasis on a more geopolitical than ideological factor. The war in Ukraine, with the positioning and alliances of diverse nations and blocs more than ideological groupings, is just one example. Another more institutional example is the creation of the New Development Bank of the BRICS. Until recently, global

financial dictatorship was marked by the privatizing and pro-Anglo-Saxon agenda of the two major banks born from the Bretton Woods Agreement in 1944: the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The motto and declared objectives of the World Bank have always been to finance the development of poor countries, while it was dedicated to protecting the investment capital of rich countries and keeping the Global South in a perpetual state of underdevelopment and indebtedness. With some linguistic cosmetics: from the invention of President Truman's advisors to include the motto "*aid for development*," it moved on to reward some model (obedient, functional) economies with the title of "*Developing Countries*" and with the predictable cosmetic and ethical makeovers to celebrate diversity: the last president of the World Bank, Ajay Banga, is an Indian naturalized American (a condition to be president of the World Bank for Development) who, like his predecessors, has no specialty or experience in the development of poor countries, but does have a resume befitting a "successful businessman": former Mastercard executive, debt collector for Citigroup, and nominated by President Joe Biden without competition. Banga confirmed to the Financial Times that his presidency would focus on the private sector in search of funds and ideas.[473]

Once appointed president of the World Bank, Ajay Banga emphasized the importance of diversity (for business). Diversity has also become a consumer product, especially in former territorial empires. Thus, those displaced by the very poverty induced by empires and Development Programs expelled millions from the former colonies, providing the white empires with their quota of famous Black individuals in soccer, in the business world, and, more recently, in the world of politics, such as Sadiq Khan, the Pakistani-descended mayor of London, or Rishi Sunak, of Indian descent and elected British prime minister. In all cases, these are individuals who represent the margin that appears to confirm the values of the center.

In 2009, in "BRIC, the Ghost Community," we summarized the elements that unite and divide the members of this bloc. None of that has changed, except that history continues to move in their favor.[474] The BRICS are not united by any ideology but by a common goal (and a common enemy). They have different political systems, different cultures, different economic powers, different histories, but all have been, and to a large extent still are, victims of Anglo-Saxon fanaticism, imperial,

privatizing what belongs to others, and obsessed with control (military, economic, political, cultural, psychological) of the other.

Now the New Development Bank of the BRICS emerges in this context, not only from the obvious need for independence through a strategic union, but also in a post-capitalist process that moves away, or attempts to move away, from the privatizing, commercial, and imperial pathology of Anglo-Saxon hegemony at any cost. The new bank has as much or more initial capital than the World Bank, and its presidents are not chosen with a single nationality but from candidates of any of the member countries. If indeed, due to the conditions mentioned earlier, a common currency, like the euro of the European Union, is practically impossible, it is possible to manage funds and loans under criteria different from those of the megabanks born from the Bretton Woods agreement. One of these new financial policies began in 2016 with the issuance of green bonds in Chinese currency for ecological development plans.

In summary, we can see a slow development of new institutions, in this case financial ones, which, born from a reaction and a new geopolitical reality, could lead to a new model of global economy and, simultaneously, a new cultural paradigm, that is, a new civilization beyond the current post-capitalism.

Redistribution and Universal Salary

THE PARABLE "*DON'T GIVE A POOR MAN A FISH but teach him how to fish*" is not only the favorite of *social media memes* and a tool for self-satisfaction when one is a poor person who has managed to save a hundred dollars (an employee or small business owner who believes they are part of Elon Musk's guild), but also another resource of moralizing colonialist capitalism that never misses an opportunity to blame the poor for their misery. Few know how to fish better than a poor person, but it should not be surprising, especially when those who secretly hate them call them lazy in public. Those lazy people who build our houses, who grow and harvest our food under the scorching sun, those who clean the bathrooms of our universities and airports, and to whom no one even says "thank you." Those who work like slaves in essential jobs but cannot go to the dentist because they have no health insurance and must resign themselves to

expressing their modest joys without teeth. Those whose children cannot go to a psychologist or psychiatrist, much less buy the medicines that keep them balanced until their brain matures at 25, and end up earlier, at 17 or 19, in police reports, in jail, and in social contempt for having *chosen* a life of crime and violence. Those invisible, damned poor, who keep our world, rich, proud, and rotten, running at the whim of the system's proud successes.

The idea of a guaranteed basic income, like almost everything, has its roots in the philosophers of ancient Greece. Plato and Aristotle understood that it was the duty of the State and the wealthiest to ensure the poor a minimum of subsistence. Similar ideas about a "guaranteed subsistence wage" were elaborated by Thomas Aquinas in the Middle Ages and centuries later by Adam Smith himself, the hero of contemporary liberals who never read him.[475]

Contemporary history shows that the most effective way to reduce poverty and obscene social differences is by giving money to the poor. This, which initially raises eyebrows and provokes unanimous laughter, is a logic that can be understood if one dedicates a minimum of time to reflection. Reducing poverty at any cost is the most economical thing a society can do, the best development strategy, and the fairest from any point of view of social justice. Poverty does not stem from a race, a syndrome, or a cultural deficiency. It stems, deeply, from the rules and a social order established by history and, above all, by the ruling classes that control resources, the economy, politics, and the narrative of their created and desired reality through the media.

Every time a Latin American government proposed some agrarian reform or the nationalization of its natural resources, with a few exceptions (such as the nationalization of Mexican oil in 1938), it always ended in a coup d'état promoted by Washington and large corporations. Not long ago, when Bolivian President Evo Morales expelled the demigods of the IMF and proposed that the country take charge of its own business, he was accused of being a dictator. To make matters worse, his political party included the word *socialism*. The numbers of the economy and social reality proved the "ignorant and dictatorial Indian" right (I quote, because it's what I had to hear more than once from Bolivian visitors in my office at Jacksonville University), something those in power never forgave him for. The same could be said of another successful president in the region, the president of Brazil, Lula da Silva, who between 2003 and 2010 lifted 30

million Brazilians out of economic misery and reduced child malnutrition by half, by giving checks (baskets) to the poor. With the expected effect of overall improvement, aside from social justice.

But every time a leader from a country in the Global South (from the former colonies) proposes a redistribution of wealth for the dual reasons of social justice and overall social and economic development, they are automatically demonized as "socialist." Ironically, those countries or nation-states that most demonize this idea of redistributing resources to their population are the ones that practice it the most. Consider, for example, Saudi Arabia and other ultraconservative oil-producing countries, whose inhabitants receive direct subsidies from the exploitation of their national resources, considered "common resources," since they were not the creation of any business genius but of nature. Or consider the case of Alaska, the largest state in the United States by territory, a bastion of American conservatives. Its citizens receive a share of their oil resources, simply for living there.

The proposal of a Universal Salary, discredited by neoliberals and conservatives (both on a collision course in our model of *Inverse Progression*), has been criticized as an idea that would promote laziness. Should those who do not work receive a basic sustenance? The answer is yes: even the lazy have a right to life. Would anyone be willing to execute or castrate those who do not work, like those who were in favor of eugenics in the 20th century? What we commonly call *lazy* are often individuals with special needs who have not been assisted by society to achieve a fuller life and, if it matters so much, a more productive one as well. Ramps are built for those who use wheelchairs, but those who suffer from a condition that is harder to visualize are hit over the head with a hammer, especially when they are poor and have not been fortunate enough to receive medical treatments accessible to other groups with more education, information, and economic power. The excluded, the young victims, are deposited in prisons or, at best, stigmatized as lazy people who deserve to live a miserable life and die prematurely between hunger and drugs.

That doesn't mean that "the drones" have the same rights as those who strive, study, and work for their own benefit and that of society. (I'm referring to the idlers of the lower classes and not those of the upper classes, because no one needs to rely on rights when they have an abundance of privileges.) The Universal Salary does not eliminate the principle based on personal merit, nor the intrinsic characteristic of human beings by

which the overwhelming majority of any society tends to create and produce new things. To assume that human beings are motivated solely by economic interests and the unlimited accumulation of wealth is to assume a simplified and dehumanized conception of the human condition. A condition that has been corrupted by capitalist, mercantilist, and utilitarian culture, but we cannot say it has been eliminated forever. There are other ways to exist, and history is full of concrete examples, not merely hypothetical ones.

The proposal for a Universal Salary has a contradictory and paradoxical precedent. During World War II, Juliet Rhys-Williams, a member of the Liberal Party (then the left in England), proposed a "negative tax" by which all those with an income below a minimum subsistence line would receive a subsidy inversely related to their income. That is, if we consider a curve of ascending incomes and cross it with a horizontal line defining a minimum subsistence level, all those below the line should receive as much as necessary to reach the minimum, while the others should pay more the higher their income. Obviously, progressive taxes are a well-known and long-practiced criterion, but not the first part. In his book *Where Do We Go from Here Chaos or Community?* (1967), Martin Luther King had foreseen the solution: "*We must create full employment or create income. I am convinced that the simplest approach will prove to be the most effective: the solution to poverty is to abolish it directly through a measure now widely discussed: the guaranteed income*."[476]

This idea was taken up decades later by one of the ideologues of neoliberal capitalism, Milton Friedman, and by President Richard Nixon. Why this sudden gesture of tenderness, when others of the same ideological stripe, such as the writer of polemical novels Ayn Rand, were proponents of *moral egoism*? Octavio Paz wrote that the right has no ideas but interests. However, when occasionally someone who seems like an intellectual emerges on the right, there is no shortage of capital or the machinery of the major media to promote them. After all, the media thrives on oddities and exceptions, not ideas. Rand had several declared admirers in politics, such as the influential Federal Reserve Chairman, Alan Greenspan, one of the architects of the de-*enclosure* (deregulation) of banking and speculation that sowed various crises in the most powerful empire in the world.

The *laissez-faire*, the repeated *freedom* of capitalist conservatives, always starts from the principle of *unlimited private property*, inaugurated as

a sacred axiom in the 16th century with the *limitation (and destruction) of communal property* through the *enclosure* (*enclosure*). But in the case of Friedman and any capitalist and neoliberal policy, the care of the poor does not arise from a break in moral egoism but to preserve private property, the right to unlimited accumulation, from possible rebellions or an increase in the criminality of the lower classes that could affect the security of the upper classes.

A world without hunger and without oppression

NEVERTHELESS, EVEN IF WE WERE TO APPROACH THAT GLOBAL UTOPIA, serious risks would still persist. The same risks that humanity has suffered for thousands of years and that, fundamentally, come from within each of us. We stopped at those deep components of human nature (that is, beyond cultures) in the early chapters.

In the 19th century, the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky had warned of this, amidst the positivist enthusiasm. It is not true that evil is merely ignorance. There is something in human nature, in its DNA, that is not content with an indefinite state of peace and harmony. Although these ancestral impulses (*libido*, in psychoanalytic terms) have largely been channeled into monumental activities founded on irrationality and surrealism—some better than others, like soccer or political circus—there still exists, deep within the human condition, a strong impulse toward conflict, and in the worst cases, toward violence.

Something similar can be observed in the biology of antibodies. As humanity has made great progress in its ways of life, with better nutrition and greater hygiene (which, along with other more social reasons, have raised life expectancy in contemporary societies), antibodies, the result of thousands of years of evolution against a much more hostile environment, have begun to attack the human body itself, producing all kinds of allergies and other health problems like arthritis, as if they were bored soldiers in times of peace.

A universal salary could solve many of humanity's basic problems, but a world without problems to solve, a hedonistic world, could be the perfect recipe for a depressive world. Just as antibodies in a perfectly hygienic world turn against the very body they are supposed to defend, the

historical impulse to fight against the world's problems could turn into a self-destructive impulse. Of course, the very word suggests the solution, which is the channeling of human energies toward creation, not destruction,

Another possibility to avoid this reality that accompanies us as a human condition would be a change in the very genetics of human beings, something that will be a center of debate in the coming generations as "the perversion of good," that is, the transformation of the human being into a spiritual plant. But here we would already be entering into speculations about a future that lies beyond the horizon.

Let us return to the concrete problems of the present. As from prehistoric times to the present day, through religious and secular periods, times of war and times of peace, all societies have imposed limits on themselves. Individual limits, like moral self-repression, and collective limits, like the rules, laws, and constitutions that govern everything from guilds and companies to entire countries. At the same time, the establishment of behavioral limits, limits to individual and collective freedom, has been in permanent dispute and mutation.

If there is one thing we can say in favor of these individual and collective limits, it is that their justification is based on the enhancement of individual and collective freedom. Whether in liberal or individualist political regimes or in statist or collectivist regimes, for better or worse, the idea is the same: some believe they can expand these freedoms by reducing the power of governments and extending the freedom of individuals and private groups, while others believe they can achieve the same by reducing the accumulated power of individuals and corporations in a society and, to achieve this, expand the power of the state. It is for no other reason that modern states emerged in 17th-century Europe and, at the same time, their opponents, the classical liberals.

One of the freedoms that both the left and the right defend (with exceptions in both groups) is freedom of expression. However, there are also disagreements about its limits. For example, the United States and Germany, two countries similar in their forms of government, differ in their laws regulating this recognized right. In the United States, the Communist Party was banned in 1954, but never the Nazi Party or its public marches. In Germany, it is, and simply denying or questioning the Jewish Holocaust is enough to land you in prison.

What seems clear, apart from the fact that limits on freedom are justified when they enhance freedom itself for a greater number of individuals that make up a society, a civilization, is that these limits, these regulations on freedom, are debatable and are in permanent negotiation in any society. Even more so when generations change, and even more so when there is a radical and historical change in habitat, as must have happened (1) when our ancestors came down from the trees to walk on two legs; (2) when they abandoned the nomadic lifestyle of gathering and hunting for the local practice of agriculture; (3) when they exchanged the life of the prairies for the conglomerations of the great cities of Sumer and Egypt; and finally, (4) when they began to abandon the three-dimensional spaces of cities and immersed themselves in the two dimensions of the internet, first, and later in the virtual reality of No-space.

In this fourth stage, which so closely resembles the first arboreal stage, societies will once again need to adapt their rules of the game to continue enhancing the delicate art of freedom (it goes without saying that in the concept of *equal-liberty* I include justice and security). Specifically, the changes could range from localized and cosmetic, such as the approval of certain laws, to more radical shifts, such as the replacement of a political, economic, and social system that has already demonstrated not only exhaustion but also ineffectiveness in solving global problems and is primarily responsible for creating them, such as obscene social inequality and environmental destruction.

Technology, Weapon and Tool

IN 2018, THE COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE of the U.S. Congress questioned Mark Zuckerberg over the data scandal in which Facebook was involved alongside Cambridge Analytica. As mentioned earlier, both mega-corporations sold and used private data from 90 million Facebook users (particularly their psychological profiles) since 2010 for political propaganda, mainly to benefit the Republican Party in the 2016 U.S. elections and to support Brexit in England. The day after the referendum in England on June 23, searches for information about what "Brexit" actually meant skyrocketed in England. In 2021, a Facebook

employee testified about the active role Facebook had played in promoting the attack on the Capitol on January 6, 2021, by far-right extremist groups.[477]

In all cases, the founder and CEO of Facebook defended himself by denying the accusations or, when they were proven and acknowledged, by downplaying their significant impact on electoral or social outcomes. The solution to a problem that doesn't exist, according to Mark Zuckerberg, is the same technology. Greater investment in Artificial Intelligence would solve the problem of fake news and the political manipulation of personal data and "computational propaganda."

However, many bots are created by AI, and although this option is expensive, it is a growing phenomenon. That something is expensive has always been a problem for many and a solution for a few. According to expert Samuel Wooley, Salesforce, Inc., Microsoft, and Google have finally succeeded in creating AI machines to summarize news, thereby appropriating the work of thousands of media outlets and journalists who produce content. They appropriate a product without paying for it.

Almost from its inception, both the CIA and the FBI have invested time and human resources in controlling the narrative of certain articles in this novel encyclopedia.[478] Now, this new form of inoculation on one of the most trusted platforms in the Internet universe has been amplified by the disproportionate appropriation of Artificial Intelligence technology developed in various universities for the benefit of capital owners. Google has even developed autonomous machines to write on Wikipedia.

Although Artificial Intelligence seems to be the protagonist that will dominate new technologies, the economy, and the concerns of 21st-century inhabitants, so far it has not been as powerful as assumed. It's not just about its high cost but also the low technology that is necessary to deceive people, that is, the functional tools of any democracy. Public opinion has been hacked long before the invention of writing. At least since the invention of oral myths. To not go too far back, let's remember that millions of Americans were deceived in 1898 by yellow journalism to launch the Spanish-American War in Cuba; in the same way, a radio program created panic about a supposed alien invasion in New York in 1938; in the same way, radio and cinema were enough for the Nazis in Germany to convince millions of civilized people that they were superior by race but that inferior races were going to exterminate them; in the same way, the CIA created fictional invasions using fictional radios, as in Guatemala in

1954, to deceive people about the communist danger of their democratic president; in the same way, today, not much technological sophistication is needed to deceive millions of people who are willing to believe rather than think against their desires.

The elimination of bots and trolls would represent one of those repairs to the mechanism. It's not that difficult to implement, as users could be required to provide some form of random identification, such as a credit card or a cell phone that couldn't be used for more than one or two accounts. If this has not been implemented yet, it is not for technical reasons but for marketing ones. Social media platforms compete to have more users, not fewer.

I am not in favor of proposing specific "solutions," as I believe the best thing we as individuals can do is to make the most accurate diagnosis possible of reality, both past and present, but it is up to societies as a whole to decide, through trial and error, what changes need to be made and in what direction they should head.

On the other hand, also as individuals, we cannot refuse to contribute some sketches of what should be done to solve certain problems and to prevent greater ones. That is why here is a summary of those ideas from a very personal point of view, without any prophetic or savior-like pretensions.

In 2008, one of the "fathers of the Internet" and vice president of Google, Vint Cerf, acknowledged that it was possible that the Internet would be better off if it were not in private hands, like a highway. In 2011, two years before his death, André Schiffrin proposed that there should be a public debate on the need to turn Google into a public company.[479] There was no discussion about the trap of transferring the control of megacorporations to that of a specific government (obviously the U.S. government) as a temporary and easily hijacked transfer by lobbies. In the specific case of the Internet, a government in line with the global nature of the network is necessary, that is, an international government.

Prohibit, regulate, survive

FEW THINGS ARE MORE DIFFICULT FOR ME THAN RECOMMENDING prohibitions. I understand that the goal of any democracy, probably of any civilization, is the expansion of individual and collective freedoms, not their

restriction. This is why history has always been a permanent dialectic between power and justice—the power of a few and the justice of the rest; that is, concentrated power and distributed power.

In this power-justice dialectic, prohibitions cover a wide range, from the arbitrariness of one (the king) or a minority (feudal lords, corporations) to the possibility of just and peaceful organization of the social collective.

In both cases, any civil, religious, or moral law starts with prohibitions. You shall not do this, you shall not do that. Automotive traffic is one of the most radical examples. It is one of the most repressive, controlled, and regulated systems, but so far no society in the world has managed to make this complex system, dependent on trillions of individual decisions, work in any other way.

More related to the media, the selective prohibition of advertising is also a widely used tool, such as banning or regulating certain promotions of cigarettes, cocaine, or child pornography. It is also necessary to expand this method from a more global and ecological perspective, for example, by prohibiting the advertising of dozens of different brands (often imported from the other side of the world) of bottled water, one of the most evident signs of the capitalist destruction of the planet.

Moreover, perhaps one day it will be concluded that in reality all commercial advertising is capitalist propaganda and that it only gives an advantage to those who have more capital to spend in that sector. We can and should also include political propaganda. The more money a sector has, the more chances it has to win an election. In fact, in the United States, according to those who work in advertising agencies, money is the main factor that decides elections. That is, advertising and propaganda are not only an essential component of the capitalist economy and its accumulation and control of power but are also undemocratic.

Why not ban advertising, from drug and political advertising at its root, and replace it with a more rational system of consumer choice information? What goes against individual freedom? Political manipulation and the destruction of the planet, no? Perhaps more than that: instead of just banning bottled water advertising, perhaps bottled water itself could be banned. Automatically, it will be argued that this could ruin many entrepreneurs and workers. Isn't that what big entrepreneurs always do when the sale of toxic products does not meet expectations and workers are fired without pity, because that's how the system works? Well, we can create

another, more rational system that does not generate profits for a few by harassing societies and destroying the planet.

Wikipedia, a case study

IN THE *DICTIONARY OF ALTERNATIVE THOUGHT* (2015) edited by Hugo Biagini in Argentina, I recognized the unusual value of Wikipedia from the perspective of what I had speculated many years earlier about a possible *radical democracy*, a direct democracy or the disobedient society.[480] It's true, it had and still has weaknesses. Once, skeptical, I introduced some absurd claim about the Second Republic in Spain, which survived at least a day. Someone corrected the error. This means that no one can cite Wikipedia as the encyclopedia itself recommends, but, on the other hand, no one can say it is a source of *fake news*, quite the opposite. In many articles, one can see how the propaganda weight sustained for decades by the mainstream press is admirably questioned.

Currently, this positive assessment has been reinforced with even more consistent and even paradoxical arguments. If we exclude academic sites, for example, there are few, if any, places in the vast ocean of the internet that are as reliable. Its main peculiarity lies in the fact that all its editors are anonymous, and although we may disagree with many decisions regarding the existence or deletion of an article, its collective administration is fairer than the alternative. The creation of false information is rather a rarity. Due to the importance and even the prestige that Wikipedia holds in the world, it is frequently the target of manipulation attempts by special interest groups, such as ideological factions or government secret agencies, which sometimes lead to "edit wars," an undesirable phenomenon in its operation but, on the other hand, inevitable due to human nature.

Wikipedia is currently, with all its flaws, the most visited and most reliable site on the internet. Surely not by chance, it is not a site that bases its existence on the commercialization of its, let's say, *product*. On the other hand, although it has an administration and a minimal number of moderators, the development of its content, its billions of articles, additions, and

corrections, does not depend on a board. On the contrary, it is an anarchic, orderly, and self-regulated factory.

Another major paradox (remember that every paradox is an unexplained logic) lies in the most recent strategies of corporate giants like Google, both in its search engine and its main video platform, YouTube. As a way to recover from a lost battle against *fake news*, Google began referring certain controversial topics to Wikipedia articles without even consulting the encyclopedia. That is, the corporate giant that can decide which topic the entire world should start discussing, with 140,000 employees with enviable salaries and profits of hundreds of billions of dollars, turns desperately to a nonprofit cooperative that operates with just two hundred paid employees, to legitimize and gain some credibility in the information it prioritizes.

So, why is anonymity so toxic and produces so many falsehoods in almost all known platforms, yet has the opposite effect on Wikipedia?

Robert McChesney believes that today a leftist perspective is more necessary than ever: throughout history, "*the left led the fight against slavery, against Jim Crow discrimination, in favor of women's rights, workers' rights, unions, public education, civil rights, fought against militaristic abuses, in favor of social security, and for regulation in favor of consumers and the environment, in each case long before others jumped on the bandwagon at the last minute; the left has been responsible for making the United States a more democratic society… and it must do the same with a reform of media power*." McChesney himself will remind us that "*media systems are not natural systems but the result of policies*." [481] And one of the immediate measures would be the promotion of non-commercial media.

Digital Democracies

IN THE 90S, WE ENTHUSIASTICALLY PUBLISHED ARTICLES AND BOOKS about direct democracy, about the Disobedient Society, largely supported by new technologies that were going to make political participation as immediate and frequent as buying a product or service online. That optimism, which in my case was born from my experience in Uruguay and Mozambique, was knocked out shortly after moving to the United States to continue postgraduate studies at UGA. My discussions with students and

colleagues, with friends and kind pastors who invited me to their churches to improve my English, left little room for doubt: rather than a radicalization of a true direct and participatory democracy, we were going to face a tribalist, nationalist, and medieval reaction.[clxiv]Precisely what we are immersed in at this moment.

But the idea did not die, nor did the possibility. Currently, the Digital Democracy Project or e-Democracy exists and is in development, whose central idea, though extremely limited, consists of direct participation in political decisions through phone applications. An application developed in Boston and currently used in several states. These new systems allow participation in an election even while being in another country.

Of course, once again and as always throughout history, new technology alone is neither the solution nor the problem, but it has the capacity to amplify both. As long as social power remains concentrated in financial centers, in the elites of millionaires, there will not be much hope for a democratizing change, for a real democracy that expands the freedom of all individuals and does not turn them into obedient zombies who believe they are the pinnacle of freedom.

Cooperatives and Workplace Democracy

ONE OF THE MOST REPEATED ARGUMENTS in defense of capitalism refers to human nature: if a shipwreck occurs and its survivors take refuge on an uninhabited island, over a few generations we will have a hierarchical society with rich and poor, with bosses and servants. The thought experiment is reasonable: it is likely that the new society will reproduce, more or less, human history from cavemen to the Romans, just as the pyramids of Sumeria and Mexico were reproduced without apparent cultural or historical contact. However, this naturalization of "what is" would assume that we must also resign ourselves to racism and tribal massacres, to slavery and capitalist exploitation.

Nor is this a new theory. All systems that preceded capitalism used it as a way to justify the status quo: feudal lords resorted to God and a

[clxiv] The reader may find some of these writings published in various media, those that still survive on the internet. Digital memory is very fragile, and most have been lost. We preserve clay writings from Sumeria and papyri from ancient Egypt that are several thousand years old, but oceans of information from just twenty years ago have disappeared.

divine and petrified social order. The last slave system, based on skin color and its permanent and hereditary status, also resorted to multiple excuses, from the will of God to racial superiority and proto-sociological theories that indicated that slavery was necessary for the development of order, peace, freedom, and civilization.

For generations, the global narrative managed to identify capitalism with democracy, basically starting from the coexistence of this system with American liberal democracy. However, historical examples from the 17th century abound in evidence that capitalism is, by nature, an anti-democratic system: it developed by expropriating lands in Europe, plundering colonies for centuries, and killing hundreds of millions around the world, establishing friendly dictatorships in the new independent republics of America, Asia, and Africa whenever democracies were not functional for it.

In core countries, such as the United States and some in Europe, the political system of liberal democracy has coexisted with the authoritarian and anti-democratic system of the labor and financial world—we could also include the university system in the United States at its level of board and presidential administration, completely removed from democratic systems in other countries.

In the current dominant system, it is very difficult to find examples of workplace democracy in a world dominated by capitalism, its institutions, and the fact that a handful of individuals possess as much capital as half the planet. Something like finding examples of "successful entrepreneurs" even as feudalism was dying, just as capitalism is dying in this century.

What in the capitalist world is called *freedom* (and is a recurring battle cry of neoliberals expert in prohibition), during the slave system was called "*the free race*" and "*the expansion of freedom*" through the expansion of slavery. In fact, the United States was founded and then tripled in size through three massive dispossessions (Indian territories, the Louisiana Purchase without consulting its owners, and the taking of Mexican territory) with the declared purpose of expanding the "*blessing of slavery*."[482] The same goes for its economic power: it was not founded on any capitalism based on *risks and benefits* nor on any free market but on slavery, the control of weapons, the development of industries through strong state protectionism and subsidies until it led to the financial and political predominance of private corporations (substitutes for slave masters after the

Civil War) and, ultimately, through the continuation of its imperialist practices via its transnational corporations, its Marines, CIA plots, and the imposition of the dollar as the global currency following World War II. All of this, naturally, supported and blessed by a gigantic apparatus of media and cultural propaganda.

In other words, the oft-repeated *freedom* of capitalists does not refer to the freedom of the employee but to that of the employer, just as the freedom of the slave owner referred to that of the "free race" (the white and wealthy master) and not to the freedom of the slaves, whether Black or white. Every time the employee threatens to limit the freedom of the employer, they are stigmatized as an irrational danger ("communist, troublemaker") who seeks to turn the logic of the world upside down and "destroy individual freedom." Exactly the same warning that for centuries justified the criminalization of rebellious slaves. As history proves, before and after slavery, before and after the Banana Republics and the Cold War, the greatest danger to corporations and accumulated capital has always been democracy. It is no coincidence that transnational corporations dedicated themselves to destroying every incipient form of democracy and replacing it with military dictatorships, always in the name of freedom, until in the 1980s it was enough to extort the peoples of the Global South through debts inoculated by the same powers of the North in their friendly dictatorships.

When Vice President Richard Nixon returned from his tour of Latin America in 1958, insulted in several countries and met with a shower of spit in Venezuela due to Washington's support for their dictatorships, President Eisenhower recommended replacing the discredited word *capitalism* with "freedom of enterprise" in every speech. From there, it was simplified even further, and only the word *freedom* remained, which is still repeated as a battle cry by the most passionate neoliberals.

Freedom of expression is a requirement of any democracy, but in capitalist democracies, it is almost a formality, as it can do little or nothing against the propaganda machinery. Equally or more important is what is missing, namely, workplace democracy. Participation in labor decisions is the foundation of any democracy, as in our world, work is to individuals what land was to a peasant in the Middle Ages or to indigenous communities in the Americas. In the capitalist system, the decision-making possibilities of a worker in any field are practically zero. In response, the culture and narrative derived from administrative, public, and private power insist

that the worker is free to leave their job and seek another. It's like saying that slaves were free to be good or bad Blacks. The employer is free to punish the employee by firing them, and the employee is free to punish themselves by quitting and losing their subsistence wage, which, not coincidentally, is always minimal (even the combined family income of its members is usually the bare minimum for survival). Every time states attempt to address this issue with some form of aid or unemployment rights, they are demonized as responsible for "market distortion," if not accused of stealing the profits of successful entrepreneurs who cannot thrive because of others' rights. For the market, even the death of an unemployed person is more logical than social security, especially when it has not been privatized in the name of more profits and more accumulation. This coercion by corporate management is excused by the law of supply and demand in the free market, minimizing what is the determining law: the free market is not and never was free. There is no freedom in a power pyramid where those at the top make the decisions and those at the bottom obey. This market extortion takes advantage of the always available margin of unemployed people who depress wages and maximize corporate profits. If that margin is not in the same city or country, it will be found in poorer countries. This dynamic explains why even an individual with excessive qualifications celebrates obtaining a job with a salary often below the subsistence level and also explains why they gradually become champions of the system and the best advocates for their employers: critics are not welcome but rather expelled. Consciously or unconsciously, the worker who wants to keep their job and achieve the promotions that ensure they and their family won't end up on the street or in debt becomes "a good Black" or, as Malcolm X called it, "the house Negro," the one who did everything possible to keep their master happy and the system of exploitation protected to avoid losing the minimal privileges accumulated through a lifetime of effort.

Beyond all the flaws of alternatives, we can point to a democratic virtue in the fact that, in a cooperative, the expulsion of a worker does not depend on the decision of an absolute boss but on a collective decision. Cooperatives are among the few existing examples of worker associations with democratic control over the management and production of their enterprises and, likely, models for the historical stage that will follow capitalism.

As we know it today, this system emerged from the Industrial Revolution with the first workers expelled from factories and with the utopian socialists, but we can see it centuries earlier in the guilds of workers and merchants during the European Middle Ages and in the economic and social systems of indigenous peoples in Africa and the Americas, which, as we saw in earlier chapters, was socially more successful than the system imposed by European conquest and, even, more successful than the new system of private property in Europe, which emerged in the 16th century. In the Americas, this success was reflected in a higher life expectancy and, even, in greater stature than that of Europeans, due to better health and working conditions (natives worked fewer hours per day and half the days per year compared to European workers), a social security system that cared for the weakest members, such as the elderly, much lower social inequality, and fewer wars. Without dwelling too much on a well-known example of democracy in North America centuries before the founding of the so-called "American democracy": the democracy of the Iroquois Confederacy, which founding intellectuals like Benjamin Franklin knew well but chose not to mention in the voluminous constitutional and unionist debates. It is not hard to guess why, if we consider the deep racism of the so-called Founding Fathers.[clxv] In fact, many other South American peoples were more democratic than Europeans and more democratic than the new nation called the United States.

From the rise of capitalism, Europe did not improve its living conditions but rather the opposite (life expectancy and stature fell for centuries while inequality grew), but it specialized in the art of war and private accumulation, which made it possible to extend its dictatorial structures from private enterprises to the criminal exploitation of transnational corporations like the West and East India Companies, carrying out the largest transfer of wealth in history, from the colonies and provinces to the center of political and geopolitical power in the West (and leaving, as we saw in more detail, several hundred million dead). Colonization turned Asia, Africa, and the Americas into poor continents. America became the most violent region in the world, but Europe (and later the United States) continued to be the most warlike continent in the world, which is not

[clxv] Franklin himself, arguing in favor of the possibility of creating a confederation of twelve independent colonies, referred to the shame that English colonists could not achieve it when "*six nations of ignorant savages*" had done so long before. (Letter from Benjamin Franklin to James Parker, March 20, 1751.)

explained solely by its history but by the very logic of privatization, exploitation, and accumulation inherent to capitalism.

Unlike capitalist enterprises, cooperatives are, by far, more democratic. While it is true that in family businesses or those with few employees, capitalist enterprises do not reach the authoritarian tyranny of large private corporations, even so, by the logic of the system, the boss is the owner and decides the fate of their employees based on their own criteria, needs, and, more frequently, based on the mysterious logic of the market, which is nothing more than the reason and interest of invisible investors. Cooperatives are not free from this "market logic," almost always manipulated by those who control capital and finance, or by their intermediaries, governments bent to their economic and financial power.

However, their internal organization is, by far, more democratic than that of any capitalist enterprise. Not only more democratic but also more effective in many aspects. For example, wages are regulated by a ratio agreed upon by each cooperative and are usually 4:1 to 5:1 between the highest-paid positions and the least specialized ones. That is, they are more equitable and transparent. As a result, the incomes of managers are, on average, lower than those of their capitalist counterparts, while the average wages of the lowest levels are higher.

Currently, in the United States, there are several examples of cooperatives managed by their workers. One of them is the Jackson Cooperative, founded in 2014 as a way to provide job opportunities and social dignity to the impoverished and marginalized Black and Hispanic population in Jackson, Mississippi. This state, the poorest in the country, has not only been one of the most productive states during the era of slavery but also the one that has endured the most violence to this day at the hands of white supremacists, from Nazis to members and sympathizers of the Ku Klux Klan, who not only dedicated themselves to lynching and terrorizing nearly half of its population because of their skin color but also continue to spare no effort in legislative plans to perpetuate their marginalization. This cooperative is not limited to the production of a single product but extends to assisting tens of thousands of people through local gardens based on ecological principles, which have not only alleviated poverty among the population but have also been crucial during crises such as the Covid pandemic of 2020-22. Similar work is carried out by cooperatives like Cooperation Humboldt in California.

In Spain, Mondragón is the largest network of cooperatives in the world and the largest company in the Basque Country. With eighty thousand workers, it operates in industry (from traditional products to automation), finance, and research with technological centers and the University of Mondragón. This university is private and nonprofit, like most private universities in the United States and elsewhere in the world, but its structure is even more democratic. As in many public universities in Latin America, professors, students, and alumni vote for electors who decide on their authorities up to the rector. In the United States, democratic participation ends at the level of faculty assemblies; beyond that, the structure is similar to that of any private corporation and, even, the same that governs politics in the Vatican.

The weakness of cooperatives like Mondragón is the same as that of social democratic policies in Europe. It lies in existing and operating within and for a capitalist context, that is, exposed to the whims of capitalist transnational corporations, large investors, and their national governments. More than that, to survive, they must reproduce the exploitative relationship with the so-called Global South through depressed wages in the process of extracting cheap raw materials and producing basic goods.

In Latin America, cooperatives have a long tradition. Every country has hundreds and even thousands of these democratic economic organizations. In Paraguay, for example, one in five workers is a cooperativist. This high proportion is due to the fact that the Guaraní, like all indigenous peoples of the continent, before the arrival of the colonizers, were unfamiliar with private property and organized themselves collectively for production and consumption. As in other parts of the pre-Columbian world, their level of democratic participation was superior to that of Europe and was exercised through assemblies (*amandayé*) and solidarity work (*oñondivepá*). The Jesuit missionaries took advantage of this cultural condition to develop their reductions, which, from an economic point of view, proved more effective and prosperous than when the dogma of private property was imposed on them.[clxvi]

These examples of cooperative, union, and social autonomy are far more democratic and participatory than the traditional capitalist

[clxvi] The Jesuits not only took advantage of the existing culture and socioeconomic structure but also, as in any other syncretism and evangelization, superimposed their own utopia, Paradise, with the Guarani utopia, the search for the Land without Evil.

enterprise. However, their mere existence has always represented a threat through bad example to the dominant system. Especially if, in many cases, they have been successful examples. This "black sheep" condition is an economic and cultural burden, but I believe it sets the model for a system that will follow the absolute dominance of capitalism, especially if the climate crisis and social inequalities worsen, as everything indicates could happen by the middle of this century at the latest. Neither the authoritarian centralism of capitalist corporations nor the centralism of the past Bolshevik model, but rather one of its precedents, both in revolutionary Russia and in republican Spain: the participation of the worker, the individual, in the process of production and consumption, in the administration of national politics, and not simply through a vote based on minimal and controlled options every two or four years.

The cooperative system, to some extent, would be a return to the Middle Ages, but not in its religious and political component, as we have been observing for decades, which we call Neomedievalism, but in its component of local organization independent of the two major options of the 20th century: capitalism and communism in its Bolshevik version. In both cases, the worker, the individual, lost decision-making power to the concentrated power of private corporations in one case, and to the concentrated power of the State in the other. As in the Middle Ages, this expansion of cooperatives, whether with physical or virtual headquarters, will have a notable impact on the borders of countries, which, for a long time, will remain more or less in the geographical locations where they are today, but their power as walls will be reduced to an irrelevant minimum. New forms of association will be established among a constellation of communities around the world, not simply connected by labor interests (assuming work will still exist within a century), but by other types of social, cultural, and existential interests.

Private property

IN THE 16TH CENTURY, THE RADICALIZATION OF PRIVATE PROPERTY of land (not the "free market," which was destroyed at that time) marked the beginning of capitalism and the violent Anglo-Saxon civilization. Although today, and for at least four centuries in Europe, it is considered an obvious

and immutable factor in modern societies, the private ownership of basic resources such as land and water (and by extension, housing, health, education, and information) has been more of a rare exception in human history. Especially when we consider humanity to include non-European peoples. Across the entire American continent, the form of land ownership, of all nature, before the European invasion and plunder, was collective use. The same was true in Africa and Asia.

Selfishness as the engine of human progress (from Adam Smith to Ayn Rand) is a theoretical and mythological invention born from the Anglo-Saxon obsession with private property and the accumulation of wealth—first legitimized by Protestant reforms, such as Calvinism, and later by an army of accountants elevated to the status of theorists and prophets.

As we saw earlier, in all major and minor religions, in all ethical and moral systems of various peoples over thousands of years, altruism, cooperation, and solidarity were prescribed as superior and vital values for human existence, while selfishness, greed, and all forms of violence stemming from these two human corruptions were condemned.

Although the proposal to abolish private property has been associated since the 19th century with Marxist communism, I believe the fate of this historical rarity, which is now considered universal, is its disappearance—or at least its subordination to the most persistent and widespread form of property: collective ownership.

One consequence we can criticize about the collective ownership model is its tendency toward *collectivism*. This, in the worst sense of the word, required in past experiments—all the right-wing fascisms and left-wing Stalinisms—the submission of the individual to the collective body through state centralization. Naturally, we are not referring to this centralization, much less to the concentration of state control over each individual. These are ghosts of failed experiments from the past and present propaganda in favor of the status quo. On the other hand, a careful analysis of democratic systems has already revealed the same effect of massification, the disappearance of the individual through the massive propaganda of the powerful (evangelizing) media of the so-called *free world*. Precisely, that world which, by defining itself through a *lack of centralization*, through a feudalization of power, through certain voting rights in an electoral system that is then called *democracy*, must be subjected to scientific

and systematic propaganda to an even greater degree than in any personal dictatorship.

It is likely that the 21st century will witness this return to origins, either as a result of evolution or as a consequence of the climate and social catastrophe stemming from the Anglo-Saxon pathology of private property, selfishness, and the commercialization of existence as the ultimate aspirations of well-being and justice.

A new civilizational paradigm

NOT ONLY IS ANOTHER WORLD POSSIBLE; IT IS INEVITABLE. But humanity's greatest challenge in envisioning new social systems has been a natural lack of collective imagination and, above all, a great difficulty (for structural, economic, and psychological reasons) in conducting large-scale social experiments. Also, because the biological lifespan of an individual would never be enough to experience the effects and necessary corrections required by any new and unknown option. Generally, individuals have a family to worry about, children they have raised with values to survive in an inherited order (in our case, capitalist values), and if they are debt-free and hope to one day achieve a decent retirement, they might have some small savings to which they dedicated a significant portion of their existence. Naturally, it would not seem fair to them to lose it all due to a last-minute change of rules.

But nothing lasts forever. If nature doesn't, much less a socioeconomic system. In the chapter "Neomedievalism vs Enlightenment," we addressed this possible post-capitalist stage. This is a speculation about a time that is almost impossible to foresee. If, during the Middle Ages under feudalism, someone had said that in the future wealth would be created by printing paper or pressing a key on a machine with the symbol "0," it would have sounded even more unreal than the tale of King Midas, who turned everything he touched into gold. That is the same situation today: we cannot, or find it very difficult, to imagine a system different from capitalism, and thus it is considered an unquestionable part of nature, just as feudalism was considered an unquestionable order from God in the Middle Ages. Even though, as we have seen, capitalism has transmuted multiple times, we still cannot see that, in reality, it has been brain-dead for

some time and is in intensive care, surviving on artificial assistance, such as the creation of money. Capitalism still exists in the lower strata (the Adam Smith level of a simple society) but has been dead for some time in its upper strata, where global and national power resides. In reality, wealth is not printed; money is printed, which is the primary instrument for extracting wealth from productive sectors. A form of invisible and unlimited tax on the working classes.

To begin, we must look again at the case of the United States, the still hegemonic power, the representative of the dying liberal-capitalist order. Let's consider only the last century of this economic, military, and cultural superpower and see how it experienced the sine wave of inverse progression in a remarkable and accelerated manner, with periods of fifty years.[clxvii] During the Great Depression of the 1930s, one of the most significant shifts to the left occurred with the new policies of Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt in favor of unions, the creation of Social Security, the involvement of the federal government in the economy, and the New Deal in general. This cycle ended with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 and the prior triumph of the neoconservative-neoliberal reaction, also facilitated by the global crisis of the 1970s, caused by oil prices, inflation, and recession in the United States, and the explosion of sovereign debts in Africa and Latin America.

Today, fifty years later, the system is once again in crisis for the third time, with minor symptoms but major causes. For the United States, it is not yet a massive economic crisis, but it is already a crisis of hegemony that will end its monetary privileges and, later, its geopolitical ones. As happened with the crisis of the Spanish Empire in 1898, this country will have to engage in deep introspection.

This megacrisis will likely occur at the beginning of the 2030s, and it will be a new opportunity, judging by the dynamics of Inverse Progression, for new generations to reorganize themselves into a system distant from neoliberalism, from capitalism as an existential framework, and to question the post-capitalist dictatorship with atomized options but with the common factor of a less consumerist and more cooperative politics and philosophy. The death of the capitalist paradigm will not mean the

[clxvii] This dynamic can also be seen when we extend this observation to the past: 1776 (American Revolution); 1828 (Jacksonian Revolution); 1860 (Abolition of Slavery); and 1900 (American Globalization).

automatic disappearance of its institutions, but a new way of seeing and living the world. Extending the theory of Inverse Progression, it would not be an exaggeration to predict that, even if the two-party system remains, the current Republican Party, hijacked by the nationalist far-right, could even switch roles again in a few decades and represent these new aspirations that in the past century were associated with the left, while the Democratic Party would return to its 19th-century role of representing the conservative, corporate, and Eurocentric South. But this last point would be a detail.

Now, before exploring the possibilities of an ideological, cultural, and civilizational shift, let's pause for a moment to consider the change in the global order that is taking place, which has been accelerated by the war in Ukraine.

If the United States was lucky with the discovery of gold one month after seizing California from Mexico in 1848; if it ran with the same luck when it eliminated the convertibility of the dollar to gold (assuming, as economists claim, that it was a "beneficial negligence"), it would seem that the politicians in Washington have been determined to keep testing their luck by exercising the only resource this country has known since its founding and the expropriation of indigenous and Mexican lands and resources, based on an addiction to weapons, war, and religious rhetoric.

As we published some time ago, the urgent and disorderly withdrawal from Afghanistan, after a twenty-year nap, only suggested a realignment for a new war. This war occurred in Ukraine, where Washington had been dictating since the creation of this country and, especially, since the 2014 coup d'état. The recipe of continuing to pressure Russia with a new expansion of NATO, the generation of a new war that in geopolitical and economic terms would function by creating a deficit in Washington and more obligations for the rest of the world to sustain the dollar, along with the classic sanctions against the besieged country, revealed opposite results.

The traditional harassment and blockade of non-aligned or overly independent countries created a new singularity: Washington blocked Venezuela and Russia, two of the world's largest oil reserves, which, trained in resisting economic pain, began to move away from the markets and the influence of Washington, being replaced by China. In turn, consistently, in 2023 China brokered an agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia, two old enemies created by Washington, one (another

dictatorship) as an ally and the other (a semi-democracy) as the representation of evil. The unintentional isolationism of Washington and the progressive replacement of the dollar as a global currency and as an instrument of coercion began an irreversible process, which could only indicate a larger war by a global empire running out of ammunition.

As the Thucydides Trap indicates, the replacement of one empire by another has always brought armed conflicts. The only exception in recent centuries was the replacement of the British Empire by the American Empire, and this was due not only to common interests but also to a common enemy in a larger conflict, Germany. Even so, we might suspect that the Second World War follows the logic of Thucydides but with a variant (the displacement of the enemy to a third competitor).

As Washington did with Fidel Castro in 1961, pushing him into the arms of the Soviet Union and bringing the Cold War conflict almost to the nuclear brink, the same traditional arrogance has pushed Third World countries out of the orbit of the United States. If this process did not happen earlier and more quickly, it was only due to the permanent economic and military coercion of Washington. Although it seems too late, a policy of repairing relations with these countries should begin, at the very least, with the recognition of past crimes, since we dismiss the possibility of our (rather rhetorical) suggestion of compensation payments for all the dead, the thefts, the destroyed democracies, and the dictatorships created or supported by Washington being taken into account.

Of course, this suggestion is not at all optimistic. When in the United States itself a movement of historical review of the times of slavery, dispossession, and discrimination began, the response was a knee-jerk reaction from conservative forces. Hundreds of books were even banned, and state and national elections were won based on the denial of past crimes and the criminalization of those who tried to investigate them and bring them to the attention of society.

Based on this historical experience, it could be anticipated that a social, cultural, and ideological change in the United States will not come until the country suffers a defeat, most likely military, that symbolizes the end of the empire and a critical introspection, perhaps something similar to what happened in Spain after its defeat and loss of its last two colonies in 1898.

Basic Bibliography

For reasons of space and clarity, this bibliography mentions only the books that the author considers most important in his research process. The "endnotes" add up to several hundred references, where the reader can search and trace the documentary sources of each statement or reference in the main text of this book.

Agee, Philip. Inside the Company: CIA diary. Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1975.

Alfonso X El Sabio. *Las siete partidas*. Selection, prologues, and notes by Francisco López Estrada and María López García-Berdoy. Madrid: Editorial Castalia, 1992.

Attkisson, Sharyl. *The Smear: How Shady Political Operatives and Fake News Control What You See, What You Think, and How You Vote*. HarperCollins, 2017.

Bernays, Edward. "The Engineering of Consent", Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science No. 250. March 1947.

Bernays, Edward L. *Propaganda*. United States, Ig Publishing, 2004

Biagini, Hugo E. *Dictionary of Alternative Thought*. Editorial Biblos, 2008.

Black, Edwin. I*BM* and the Holocaust. The Strategic Alliance Between Nazi Germany and America's Most Powerful Corporation. Three Rivers Press, 2002

Cascardi, Anthony J. *The subject of modernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Courtois, Stéphane, Rémi Kauffer. *The Black Book of Communism. Crimes, Terror, and Repression*. Robert Laffont, 1997.

Davis, P., Francois, A., & Starger, C. University of Baltimore School of Law *"The Persistence of the Confederate."*

Dimsdale, Joel E. *Dark Persuasion: A History of Brainwashing from Pavlov to Social Media*. Yale UP, 2021.
Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth.* Paris : Françoise Maspero, 1968.
Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. [1952] Preface (1952) and postface (1965) by Francis Jeason. Paris, Éditions du Senil, 1965.
Gelbspan, Ross. *Break-ins, Death Threats and the FBI: The Covert War Against the Central America Movement*. South End P, 1991.
Gibbs, David N. *The Political Economy of Third World Intervention: Mines, Money, and U.S. Policy in the Congo Crisis*. U of Chicago P, 1991.
Goytisolo, Juan. Makbara. Barcelona: Editorial Seix Barral: 1980.
Greenwald, Glenn. *No Place to Hide: Edward Snowden, the NSA, and the U.S. Surveillance State*. Macmillan, 2014.
Hamilton, Alexander. *Report on the Subject of Manufactures*. Cosimo, 2007.
Hickel, Jason. *The Divide: A Brief Guide to Global Inequality and its Solutions*. Random House, 2017.
Hudson, Michael. *Super Imperialism: The Origin and Fundamentals of U.S. World Dominance*. Islet, 2021.
Hunt, E. H., and Greg Aunapu. *American Spy: My Secret History in the CIA, Watergate and Beyond*. John Wiley & Sons, 2007.
Jones-Rogers, Stephanie E. *They Were Her Property: White* Women as Slave Owners in the American South. Yale University Press, 2019.
Kagan, Donald, and Gary Schmitt. *Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century*. Project for the New American Century, 2000.
Leffler, Melvyn P., and Odd A. Westad. *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*. "The Cold War in Central America, 1975–1991" (John Coatsworth). Cambridge UP, 2010.
Locke, John. *Second Treatise of Government and a Letter Concerning Toleration*. United Kingdom, Oxford University Press, 2016.
Majfud, Jorge. *The Savage Frontier: 200 Years of Anglo-Saxon Fanaticism in Latin America*. Rebelde Editores, April 2021.
Majfud, Jorge. *The Eternal Return of Quetzalcoatl: A Theory on Pre-Hispanic Myths in Latin America and Their Traces in 20th Century Literature*. Editorial Academia Española, 2012.

Majfud, Jorge. *The Narration of the Invisible: A Political Theory of Semantic Fields*. 4th ed., Humanus, 2021.
Marx, Karl. *Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production*. Tr. from the 3d German ed., by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, and ed. by Frederick Engels. New York: Humboldt pub., 1890.
Marx, Karl. *Free Trade: A Speech Delivered Before the Democratic Club, Brussels, Belgium, Jan. 9, 1848. With Extract from La Misère de la Philosophie*. 1888.
McCain, John. *The Official Senate Report on CIA Torture: Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency's Detention and Interrogation Program*. Simon & Schuster, 2015.
McChesney, Robert W. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times*. The New Press, 2016.
Montaner, Lidia B. *Attacks on Freedom of Information and the Media in Chile, 1973-1987*. CENECA, 1988.
More, Thomas. Utopia. United Kingdom, Dent, 1899.
Nowlan, Robert A. *The American Presidents From Polk to Hayes: What They Did, What They Said & What Was Said About Them*. Outskirts P, 2016.
Phillips, David A. *The Night Watch: 25 Years Inside the CIA*. Robert Hale Ltd, London, 1978.
Roosevelt, Theodore. *Works: American Ideals, with a Biographical Sketch by Francis Vinton Greene; Administration-Civil Service*. 1897.
Sábato, Ernesto. *Men and Gears*. Buenos Aires, Emecé, 1951.
Sábato, Ernesto. *One and the Universe*. Buenos Aires, Sudamericana: 1973.
Saunders, Frances S. *Who Paid the Piper? The Cultural Cold War*. Granta Books, 2000.
Scheidel, Walter. *The Great Leveler: Violence and the History of Inequality from the Stone Age to the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton UP, 2018.
Simpson, Christopher. *Blowback: America's Recruitment of Nazis and Its Destructive Impact on Our Domestic and Foreign Policy*. Open Road Media, 2014.
Singer, Peter W., and Emerson T. Brooking. *Likewar: The Weaponization of Social Media*. Eamon Dolan Books, 2018.
Snowden, Edward. *Permanent Record*. Picador, 2019.

Stephens-Davidowitz, Seth. *Everybody Lies: Big Data, New Data, and What the Internet Can Tell Us About Who We Really Are*. Harper-Collins, 2017.
Stiff, Edward. *The Texan Emigrant: Being a Narration of the Adventures of the Author in Texas*. Cincinnati: George Conclin Ed, 1840.
Sullivan, D., & Hickel, J. (2023). Capitalism and Extreme Poverty: A Global Analysis of Real Wages, Human Height, and Mortality Since the Long 16th Century. *World Development*, *161*.
Talbot, David. *The Devil's Chessboard: Allen Dulles, the CIA, and the Rise of America's Secret Government*. Harper Perennial, 2016.
Twain, Mark. *My Autobiography: Chapters from the North American Review*. United States, Dover Publications, 2012.
Veciana, Antonio, and Carlos Harrison. Trained to Kill: The Inside Story of CIA *Plots Against Castro, Kennedy*, and Che. Skyhorse, 2017.
Vespucci, Amerigo. *The New World: Letters Relating to His Voyages and Discoveries*. Texts in Italian, Spanish, and English. Preliminary study by Roberto Levillier. Buenos Aires: Nova, 1951.
Vine, David. *The United States of War: A Global History of America's Endless Conflicts, from Columbus to the Islamic State*. University of California Press, 2020.
Weiner, Tim. *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA*. Anchor, 2008.
White, Gregory L., et al. *The Chilling Effects of Surveillance: Deindividuation and Reactance*. 1975.
Whitney, Joel. *Finks: How the C.I.A. Tricked the World's Best Writers*. OR Books, 2017.
Wood, Ellen M. *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View*. Verso Books, 2017.
Woolley, Samuel. *The Reality Game: How the Next Wave of Technology Will Break the Truth*. Endeavor, 2020.
Woolley, Samuel C., and Philip N. Howard. *Computational Propaganda: Political Parties, Politicians, and Political Manipulation on Social Media*. Oxford Studies in Digital Politics, 2018.
Zaller, John R., and Zaller J. R. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge UP, 1992.
Zegart, Amy B. *Spies, Lies, and Algorithms: The History and Future of American Intelligence*. Princeton UP, 2022.

Sources

[1] Kim, Kil W., et al. "Functional values of stabilimenta in a wasp spider, Argiope bruennichi: support for the prey-attraction hypothesis". *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology*, vol. 66, no. 12, 2012, pp. 1569-1576.
[2] Zaller, John R., and Zaller J. R. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge UP, 1992. P. 15.
[3] Jorge Majfud. (2006, November 14). "The Slow Suicide of the West [El lento suicidio de Occidente]" Montly Review. mronline.org/2006/11/14/majfud141106-html
[4] "Minutes before El Paso Killing, Hate-Filled Manifesto Appears Online (Published 2019)." *The New York Times*, 2022, www.nytimes.com/2019/08/03/us/patrick-crusius-el-paso-shooter-manifesto.html.
[5] Radio Uruguay. (2016). "La teoría de la cabra de Majfud". 14 de junio de 2016: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1DXbl2MvIA
[6] Majfud, Jorge. *La frontera salvaje. 200 años de fanatismo anglosajón en América Latina*. Rebelde Editores, febrero 2021, p. 161.
[7] Majfud, Jorge. *Crisis*. Colectivo Cultural Baile del Sol, 2012, p. 61.
[8] "Thin line between desire and dread: Dopamine controls both". (2008, July 14). University of Michigan: news.umich.edu/thin-line-between-desire-and-dread-dopamine-controls-both/ Ver también: Baumgartner, H. M., Cole, S. L., Olney, J. J., & Berridge, K. C. (2020). Desire or Dread from Nucleus Accumbens Inhibitions: Reversed by Same-Site Optogenetic Excitations. *The Journal of Neuroscience*, *40*(13), 2737–2752. https://doi.org/10.1523/jneurosci.2902-19.2020
[9] McChesney, Robert W. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times*. New Press, 2016, p. 34.
[10] "New study finds that violence doesn't add to children's enjoyment of TV shows, movies". Indiana University. (2012): newsinfo.iu.edu/web/page/normal/18805.html
[11] Bachman, Frank Puterbaugh. Great Inventors and Their Inventions. United Kingdom, American Book Company, 1918, p. 222.
[12] Schlenoff, Daniel C. "50, 100 & 150 Years Ago: Ads Go Subliminal, Wrights Soar and Continents Connect." *Scientific American*, Aug. 2008, https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/50-100-150-first-transatlantic-telegraph/.
[13] Creelman, James. *On the great highway: the wanderings and adventures of a special correspondent*. Boston, Lothrop, 1901.
[14] Singer, Peter W., and Emerson T. Brooking. *Likewar: The Weaponization of Social Media*. Eamon Dolan Books, 2018.
[15] Idem.
[16] Idem, p. 32.

[17] Majfud, Jorge. *Narracion de lo invisible*. *Una teoría política de los Campos semánticos*. Editorial Académica España, 2018.
[18] Bourcier, Nicolas, et al. "En Amérique Latine, Les Accents pro-Poutine De La Gauche." *Le Monde.fr*, Le Monde, 27 Mar. 2022, https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2022/03/27/en-amerique-latine-les-accents-pro-poutine-de-la-gauche_6119309_3210.html.
[19] "Neanderthals Boosted Our Immune System." *Www.mpg.de*, 2016, www.mpg.de/9819763/neanderthal-genes-immune-system.
[20] Majfud, Jorge. "La libertad vigilada de los Libertarios. ALAI." *ALAI*, 22 Apr. 2022, www.alai.info/la-libertad-vigilada-de-los-libertarios/.
[21] Snowden, Edward. *Permanent Reocrod*. Picador, 2019, Pg. 113.
[22] Gelbspan, Ross. *Break-ins, Death Threats and the FBI: The Covert War Against the Central America Movement*. South End P, 1991, p. 22.
[23] Alter, C. (2016, April 29). "California Rejects John Wayne Day Because of Actor's Comments on Race". *Time*: time.com/4312343/california-john-wayne-day-race/
[24] "President's Message. Message From the President of the United Stales, to the two Houses of Congress, at the commencement of the Second Session of the Twenty-Second Congress". David V. Culley. Indiana Paladium, Volume 8, Number 49, Lawrenceburg, Dearborn County. 22 de diciembre de 1932. No. 49.
[25] The United States Magazine and Democratic Review. United States, Langtree and O'Sullivan, 1852.
[26] "Crucible of Empire" PBS. www.pbs.org/crucible/tl7.html
[27] "Allende Wins". National Security Archive. (2020, September 4). nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/chile/2020-09-04/allende-wins
[28] "Harry S. Truman: Decisive President" The Lightning' Strikes in War. Alden Whitman. *The New York Times*, 27 de diciembre de 1972, p 46-47. https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1972/12/27/84161748.pdf?pdf_redirect=true&ip=0
[29] Howard, Philip, et al. *Social Media, News and Political Information during the US Election: Was Polarizing Content Concentrated in Swing States?* 2017, arxiv.org/ftp/arxiv/papers/1802/1802.03573.pdf.
[30] "Streams of Content, Limited Attention: The Flow of Information through Social Media." *Danah.org*, 2022, www.danah.org/papers/talks/Web2Expo.html.
[31] "Dissecting the #PizzaGate Conspiracy Theories (Published 2016)." *The New York Times*, 2022, www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/12/10/business/media/pizzagate.html.
[32] Diamond, Jeremy. "Donald Trump: 'I Will Totally Accept' Election Results 'If I Win.'" *CNN*, CNN, 20 Oct. 2016, www.cnn.com/2016/10/20/politics/donald-trump-i-will-totally-accept-election-results-if-i-win/index.html.
[33] "La Pornografía Política". *Rebelion.org*, 1 octubre 2016, rebelion.org/la-pornografia-politica/.
[34] Cobb, C. *The Atlantic*, 12 de noviembre de 2015. www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1995/10/if-the-gdp-is-up-why-is-america-down/415605/
[35] Hickel, Jason. *The Divide: A Brief Guide to Global Inequality and its Solutions*. Random House, 2017, p. 285.

[36] Rowson, Jonathan. *The Understandable Madness of Economic Growth*. The RSA, 26 de marzo de 2012. www.thersa.org/blog/2012/03/the-understandable-madness-of-economic-growth
[37] Hoover Institution. "The De-Population Bomb". *YouTube*. www.youtube.com/watch?v=uNdnlrkx-wg
[38] Adam. *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. General Editors. H. Campbell and S. Skinner. Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1979, p. 181 (I.xi.c).
[39] Kuhlmeier V, Wynn K, Bloom P. "Attribution of dispositional states by12-month-olds". Psychological Science. 2003; 14:402-408.
[40] J. Kiley Hamlin, & Wynn, K. "Young infants prefer prosocial to antisocial others". *26*(1), 30–39. doi.org/10.1016/j.cogdev.2010.09.001
[41] Henry C. Simons. "Economic Policy for a Free Society". Chicago: University of Chicago Simons (1947), p. 43.
[42] *El Mercurio*, Chile, 12 de abril de 1981.
[43] Sábato, Ernesto. *Sobre héroes y tumbas*. Seix Barral, 1986, C. X.
[44] Popova, M. "All Ideas Are Second-Hand: Mark Twain's Magnificent Letter to Helen Keller About the Myth of Originality". *The Marginalian*, 10 de mayo de 2012. www.themarginalian.org/2012/05/10/mark-twain-helen-keller-plagiarism-originality/
[45] Bhadra, S. "The Impact of British Industrial Revolution on a Bengal Industry". *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2014, *19* (4), p. 14.
[46] Majfud, Jorge. "*What consumerism learnt from slavery*" Art, Londres, 30 de julio de 2021. IAI TV. Changing How the World Thinks: iai.tv/articles/what-consumerism-learnt-from-slavery-auid-1851?_auid=2020
[47] Bhadra, S. "The Impact of British Industrial Revolution on a Bengal Industry". *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2014, *19* (4), p. 12.
[48] Sengupta, S. "*Bengal's plunder gifted the British Industrial Revolution*". Financial Express (7 de febrero de 2010): www.financialexpress.com/archive/bengals-plunder-gifted-the-british-industrial-revolution/576476/
[49] *The Cambridge History of Western Textiles*. United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 743.
[50] "Population Growth and Renaissances" (1993). Schillerinstitute.com: archive.schillerinstitute.com/fid_91-96/934_population_growth.html
[51] Majfud, Jorge. *El eterno retorno de Quetzalcóatl: Una teoría sobre los mitos prehispánicos en América Latina y sus trazas en la literatura del siglo XX*. Ewe Editorial Acad MIA Espa Ola, 2012.
[52] Smith, Adam. *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. General Editors. H. Campbell and S. Skinner. Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1979, p. 471 (IV.ii.43).
[53] Idem, p. 386 (III.ii.8).
[54] Idem, p. 114 (I.ix.22).
[55] Idem, p. 464 (IV.ii.30).
[56] Polanyi, Karl. *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. Beacon P, 2001, p. 37.
[57] Wood, Ellen M. *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View*. Verso Books, 2017, p. 23.

[58] Scheidel, Walter. *The Great Leveler: Violence and the History of Inequality from the Stone Age to the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton UP, 2018.
[59] Wood, Ellen M. *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View*. Verso Books, 2017, p. 175-6.
[60] Wood, Ellen M. *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View*. Verso Books, 2017, p. 184.
[61] Arama, N. "Elon Blasts WEF Effort to Run World, Tucker Finishes Them Off". RedState, 19 de enero de 2023. redstate.com website: https://redstate.com/nick-arama/2023/01/19/elon-blasts-wef-effort-to-run-world-tucker-finishes-them-off-n690668
[62] Pareene, A. "Now apparently it's a slam to say Paul Ryan likes Ayn Rand". *Salon*, 26 de abril de 2012; www.salon.com/2012/04/26/now_apparently_its_a_slam_to_say_paul_ryan_likes_ayn_rand/
[63] Wood, Ellen M. *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View*. Verso Books, 2017, p. 99 y 128.
[64] Parry, Richard. "In a Sense Citizens, but Not Altogether Citizens...: Rhodes, Race, and the Ideology of Segregation at the Cape in the Late Nineteenth Century." *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Africaines*, vol. 17, no. 3, 1983, pp. 377–91. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/484923.
[65] Wood, Ellen M. *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View*. Verso Books, 2017, p. 143.
[66] More, Thomas. *Utopia*. United Kingdom, Dent, 1899, p. 18.
[67] Locke, John. *Second Treatise of Government and a Letter Concerning Toleration*. United Kingdom, Oxford University Press, 2016. Capítulo V. "Of Property" (p. 25-51) y IX "Of the Ends of Political Society and Government" (p 63).
[68] Wood, Ellen. *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View*. Verso, 2017, p. 111.
[69] Locke, John. *Second Treatise of Government and a Letter Concerning Toleration*. United Kingdom, Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 16.
[70] Alden t. Vaughan, *New England Frontier: Puritans and Indians*, *1620-1675* (1965), p. 110. También, ver: Winthrop 1629. Indiana University. konstantindierks.indiana.edu/H105-documents-web/week04/Winthroponnatives1629.html
[71] Idem p. 110. También: Winthrop 1629. Indiana University. konstantindierks.indiana.edu/H105-documents-web/week04/Winthroponnatives1629.html
[72] Dorfman, Ariel y Armand Matterlart. *Para leer al pato Donald*. Prólogo de Héctor Schmucler. Buenos Aires, Siglo XXI, 1972, p. 41, 48, 49 y 64.
[73] Hickel, Jason. *The Divide: A Brief Guide to Global Inequality and its Solutions*. Random House, 2017, p. 102.
[74] Wood, Ellen M. *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View*. Verso Books, 2017, p. 128 y 113.
[75] Hamilton, Alexander. *Report on the Subject of Manufactures*. Cosimo, 2007.
[76] *Theory and Methodology of World Development: The Writings of Andre Gunder Frank*. United Kingdom, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 47.
[77] Tusveld, Ruud, and van de Heetkamp, Anne. *Origin Management: Rules of Origin in Free Trade Agreements*. Germany, Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2011, p. 39.

[78] Alberdi, Juan Bautista. *La barbarie histórica de Sarmiento*. [1865] Buenos Aires: Ediciones Pampa y cielo, 1964, p. 13 y 56.
[79] Sarmiento, D. F. "Argirópolis o la Capital de los Estados Confederados del Río de la Plata" (1896). *Obras de Sarmiento*. Tomo XIII, Buenos Aires, Gobierno argentino, p. 85.
[80] Unamuno, Miguel D. *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida. La agonía del cristianismo*. Ediciones AKAL, 1983.
[81] Ricardo, David. *The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*. 1817, p. 360-363.
[82] Marx, Karl. *Free Trade: A Speech Delivered Before the Democratic Club, Brussels, Belgium, Jan. 9, 1848. With Extract from La Misère de la Philosophie*. 1888.
[83] Hobson, J.A. I*mperialism: A Study*. London: James Nisbet. 1902, p. 60.
[84] McMaken, Ryan. "South Africa's Land Confiscation: Socialism by Another Name". 24 de Agosto de 2018. Mises Institute: mises.org/wire/south-africas-land-confiscation-socialism-another-name
[85] Birnbaum, E. "South African president: Trump ill-informed on land and farm seizures". *The Hill*, 21 de noviembre de 2018: thehill.com/homenews/administration/417818-south-african-president-trump-ill-informed-on-south-african-land-farm
[86] Brown, M. (30 de junio de 2020). "Fact check: United Kingdom finished paying off debts to slave-owning families in 2015". USA TODAY. www.usatoday.com/story/news/factcheck/2020/06/30/fact-check-u-k-paid-off-debts-slave-owning-families-2015/3283908001/
[87] "The New Reparations Math". (15 de junio de 2020), University of Connericut Magazine. magazine.uconn.edu/2020/06/15/the-new-reparations-math/
[88] Wood, Ellen. *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View*. Verso, 2017, p. 96.
[89] Alfonso X El Sabio. *Las siete partidas*. Selección, prólogos y notas de Francisco López Estrada y María López García-Berdoy. Madrid: Editorial Castalia, 1992.
[90] Huarte, Juan. *Examen de ingenios para las ciencias*. [1575] Edición preparada por Esteban Torre. Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1977, p. 291-292.
[91] Hickel, Jason. *The Divide: A Brief Guide to Global Inequality and its Solutions*. Random House, 2017, p. 75.
[92] Farris, H. (2017). "Shashi Tharoor argues why British Rule destroyed India, North Korea & Liberalism". www.youtube.com/watch?v=jaNotcGak3Y
[93] Sullivan, D., & Hickel, J. (2023). Capitalism and extreme poverty: A global analysis of real wages, human height, and mortality since the long 16th century. *World Development*, *161*, 106026. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2022.106026
[94] "16 million and counting: the collateral damage of capital". (2022, December 22. *New Internationalist*: https://newint.org/features/2022/12/05/neoliberalism-16-million-and-counting-collateral-damage-capital
[95] Marx, Karl. *Capital: a critical analysis of capitalist production*. Tr. from the 3d German ed., by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, and ed. by Frederick Engels. New York: Humboldt pub., 1890, p. 359.
[96] Idem. 481.
[97] Idem, p. 483-494.
[98] *General History of the Caribbean: The long nineteenth century*. United Kingdom, Macmillan, 1997, p. 571.

[99] "Empire and Economics: The Long History of Debt-Cancelation from Antiquity to Today". Conferencia The People's Forum, Nueva York. www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4DkZ3CWFOk
[100] Senador John F. Kennedy. Comité de Relaciones Exteriores de los Estados Unidos, 10 de junio de 1959. "Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: (1959)". United States, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982, p. 618.
[101] Parisien, L. "Quand Sankara contestait avec humour la dette du Burkina Faso". 9 de julio de 2015. Le Parisien www.leparisien.fr/archives/video-quand-sankara-contestait-avec-humour-la-dette-du-burkina-faso-09-07-2015-4931821.php
[102] "One in three of world's poorest countries pay more on debt repayments than education." 12 de octubre de 2022. Save the Children International. www.savethechildren.net/news/one-three-world-s-poorest-countries-pay-more-debt-repayments-education-save-children
[103] McDonnell, T. "U.S. Supreme Court Rules That World Bank Can Be Sued" (7 de marzo de 2019). NPR: www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2019/03/07/699437482/supreme-court-rules-that-world-bank-can-be-sued
[104] Majfud, Jorge. *Teología Del Dinero: El Lento Derrumbe Del Orden Anglosajón*. Humanus, 2022./ "Teología del dinero" *Bitácora*, La República, Montevideo 2002. web.archive.org/web/20021228082231/http://www.bitacora.com.uy/articulos/2002/noviembre/98/98general.htm#majfud
[105] Majfud, Jorge. *La Frontera Salvaje: 200 Años de Fanatismo Anglosajón en América Latina*. Rebelde 2021, p. 61.
[106] Hudson, Michael. *Super Imperialism: The Origin and Fundamentals of U.S. World Dominance*. Islet, 2021, p. v, p. 21.
[107] Idem, 2021, p. v, p. 18.
[108] Idem, 2021, p. v, p. 24.
[109] Griffin, G. Edward. *The creature from Jekyll Island*. United States, American Media, 1995, p. 218.
[110] *British Medical Association* "Child and Adolescent Mental Health". Junio 2006.
[111] Nurnberg, Hugo, and Douglas P. Lackey. "Ethical Reflections on Company-Owned Life Insurance." *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 80, no. 4, 2008, pp. 845–54. www.jstor.org/stable/25482185
[112] Sky News Australia. (2023). "They can cry in a Ferrari". *YouTube*. www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNCs4Gz4TiY
[113] Mishra, S. (2022, December 29). "Internet bows down to Greta Thunberg's savage response to influencer Andrew Tate's '33 cars' tweet". *India Today*: https://shorturl.at/biqP3
[114] Wood, Ellen M. *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View*. Verso Books, 2017, p. 7, 12, 14.
[115] Wood, Ellen M. *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View*. Verso Books, 2017, p. 126.
[116] Majfud, Jorge. *La frontera salvaje. 200 años de fanatismo anglosajón en América Latina*. Rebelde Editores, febrero 2021, p. 43.
[117] "What consumerism learnt from slavery", Jorge Majfud. *Changing how the world thinks. Art, IAI TV*, 30 de julio de 2021: iai.tv/articles/what-consumerism-learnt-from-slavery-auid-1851?_auid=2020

[118] Sábato, Ernesto. *Hombres y engranajes*. Buenos Aires, Emecé, 1951.
[119] *El Mercurio*, Chile, 12 de abril de 1981.
[120] "The World Bank and water privatisation: public money down the drain". Bretton Woods Project, 26 de setiembre de 2008. Bretton Woods Project: www.brettonwoodsproject.org/2008/09/art-562458/
[121] Governor DeSantis Announces Legislative Proposal to Stop W.O.K.E. Activism and Critical Race Theory in Schools and Corporations. (2021). www.flgov.com/2021/12/15/governor-desantis-announces-legislative-proposal-to-stop-w-o-k-e-activism-and-critical-race-theory-in-schools-and-corporations/
[122] Wood, Ellen M. *Democracy Against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism*. Verso Books, 2016.
[123] *El Mercurio*, Chile, 12 de abril de 1981.
[124] "Top 1% Of U.S. Households Hold 15 Times More Wealth Than Bottom 50% Combined". *Forbes*, 12 de octubre de 2022.
[125] "The Productivity-Pay Gap". Economic Policy Institute, octubre 2022: www.epi.org/productivity-pay-gap/
[126] Weiner, Tim. *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA*. Anchor, 2008, p. 3-4.
[127] Cordesman, Anthony H., et al. "China's Emergence as a Military Superpower: China vs. US and Russia." *China and the U.S.: Cooperation, Competition and/or Conflict An Experimental Assessment*, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), 2019, pp. 193–204. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep22586.20.
[128] McChesney, Robert W. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times*. New Press, 2016, liv.
[129] "Birth of an Era", *Time*, 13 de agosto de 1945, p. 17.
[130] "Awful Responsability", *Time*, 20 de agosto de 1945, p. 29.
[131] AFP. "Yo no les tiré una bomba atómica" El Mundo, 29 de mayo de 2002.
[132] John Thornhill. "Russia's Unfinished Revolution". *Finantial Times*. 30 de mayo de 1996, p. 13.
[133] Chomsky, Noam. "Paths Taken, Tasks Ahead." *Profession*, 2000, pp. 32–39. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25595700.
[134] Wood, Ellen M. *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View*. Verso, 2017, p. 113.
[135] McIntire, Mike. "The Secret History of Gun Rights: How Lawmakers Armed the N.R.A". *The New York Times*, 30 de julio de 2023, Sección 1, P. 1.
[136] Idem.
[137]Singer, Peter W., and Emerson T. Brooking. *Likewar: The Weaponization of Social Media*. Eamon Dolan Books, 2018, p. 127.
[138] Majfud, Jorge. "La pornografía política." *Página12*, 22 Feb. 2017, www.pagina12.com.ar/1678-la-pornografia-politica.
[139] Twain, Mark. *My Autobiography: Chapters from the North American Review.* United States, Dover Publications, 2012, p. 96.
[140] "Highs and lows of an Englishman's average height over 2000 years". University of Oxford. (17 de abril de 2017). https://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2017-04-18-highs-and-lows-englishman%E2%80%99s-average-height-over-2000-years-0
[141] Vespucio, Américo. *El nuevo mundo. Cartas relativas a sus viajes y descubrimientos*. Textos en italiano, español e inglés. Estudio preliminar de Roberto Levillier. Buenos Aires: Nova, 1951, ps. 100-120.
[142] Idem, p. 165.

[143] Leutwyler, K. "American Plains Indians Had Health and Height". (30 de mayo de 2001). *Scientific American*: www.scientificamerican.com/article/american-plains-indians-h/
[144] "Standing Tall: Plains Indians Enjoyed Height, Health Advantage" (23 de mayo de 2001). The Ohio State University: news.osu.edu/standing-tall-plains-indians-enjoyed-height-health-advantage/
[145] Roosevelt, Theodore. "National Life and Character." (1894) *Teaching American History*: teachingamericanhistory.org/document/national-life-and-character/
[146] *William Lloyd Garrison's The Liberator*. 11 de setiembre de 2015. www.accessible-archives.com/collections/the-liberator/
[147] *Abolitionists and Free Speech*. (2021). Mtsu.edu. www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/2/abolitionists-and-free-speech
[148] *Avalon Project. Constitution of the Confederate States;* March *11, 1861*. Yale University. avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/csa_csa.asp
[149] "The fin de siècle newspaper proprietor". F. Opper. (2015). The Library of Congress: www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca.29087/
[150] "The Spymaster's Toolkit", CIA, 2016, www.cia.gov/stories/story/the-spymasters-toolkit/.
[151] "Morale Operations Branch." *Military Wiki*, 2014, military-history.fandom.com/wiki/Morale_Operations_Branch.
[152] Nowlan, Robert A. *The American Presidents From Polk to Hayes: What They Did, What They Said & What Was Said About Them*. Outskirts P, 2016, p. 599.
[153] Talbot, David. *The Devil's Chessboard: Allen Dulles, the CIA, and the Rise of America's Secret Government*. Harper Perennial, 2016, p. 318.
[154] Talbot, David. *The Devil's Chessboard.* Harper Perennial, 2016, p. 317.
[155] Idem, p. 324.
[156] Idem, p. 330.
[157] Talbot, David. *The Devil's Chessboard.* Harper Perennial, 2016, p. 330.
[158] Talbot, David. *The Devil's Chessboard.* Harper Perennial, 2016, p. 333.
[159] Talbot, David. *The Devil's Chessboard.* Harper Perennial, 2016, p. 334.
[160] Hunt, E. H., and Greg Aunapu. *American Spy: My Secret History in the CIA, Watergate and Beyond*. John Wiley & Sons, 2007.
[161] *American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents, 1950-1955*. United States, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957, p. 1315.
[162] Talbot, David. The Devil's Chessboard. Harper Perennial, 2016, p. 377.
[163] *Senate Report. 1st Session.* (n.d.). www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/94465.pdf
[164] Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958–1960, Africa, Volume XIV. Office of the Historian. State.gov. history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v14/d221
[165] U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) Independent Statistics and Analysis. (n.d.). www.eia.gov/international/content/analysis/countries_long/Algeria/algeria.pdf
[166] Phillips, David A. *The Night Watch: 25 Years Inside the CIA*. 1978.
[167] Weissman, Stephen R. "What Really Happened in Congo: The CIA, the Murder of Lumumba, and the Rise of Mobutu." *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 93, no. 4, 2014, pp. 14-24.

[168] Beirlant, B. (2002, February 5). "België biedt excuses aan voor Lumumba". De Standaard. www.standaard.be/cnt/dst06022002_001
[169] Staes, B. (2021, January 21). Stad Gent schrapt Leopold II-laan, bewoners krijgen compensatie voor adreswijziging. Het Nieuwsblad: www.nieuwsblad.be/cnt/dmf20210121_96144084
[170] Snider, T. (9 de agosto de 2021). "US-Cuban Relations: How It All Got Started" - Antiwar.com: original.antiwar.com/ted_snider/2021/08/08/us-cuban-relations-how-it-all-got-started/
[171] James, J. (n.d.). "Harlem Hospitality and Political History: Malcolm X and Fidel Castro at the Hotel Theresa". *Contributions in Black Studies*, *12*. scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1088&context=cibs
[172] Markle, Seth M. "Brother Malcolm, Comrade Babu: Black Internationalism and the Politics of Friendship." *Biography*, vol. 36, no. 3, 2013, pp. 540–67. *JStor*. www.jstor.org/stable/24570209.
[173] "The mafia: The Demise of a Don". (30 de junio de 1975). TIME.com. content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,917569,00.html
[174] "Discurso pronunciado por el Comandante Fidel Castro en la Sede de las Naciones Unidas el 26 de setiembre de 1960". Cuba.cu. www.cuba.cu/gobierno/discursos/1960/esp/f260960e.html
[175] Talbot, David. *The Devil's Chessboard*. Harper Perennial, 2016, p. 344.
[176] Ell, D., & Eleased, R. (1956). *Name of Projects LCCASSOCK Headquarters Case Officers Field Case Officer: SECRET*. www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/
[177] Sabatini, Christopher. "The Land of Too Many Summits." *Foreign Policy*, 12 Apr. 2012, https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/04/12/the-land-of-too-many-summits/.
[178] Attkisson, Sharyl. *The Smear: How Shady Political Operatives and Fake News Control What You See, What You Think, and How You Vote*. HarperCollins, 2017, P. 12-13.
[179] Idem, p. 14.
[180] Greenwald, Glenn. *No Place to Hide*. Macmillan, 2014, p. 194.
[181] LoGiurato, B. (16 de junio de 2013). "CBS' Bob Schieffer Destroys Edward Snowden In 90 Seconds". Business Insider: https://www.businessinsider.com/bob-schieffer-edward-snowden-face-the-nation-2013-6
[182] Ramirez, S. (n.d.). *The Racist Roots of the War on Drugs and the Myth of Equal The Racist Roots of the War on Drugs and the Myth of Equal Protection for People of Color Protection for People of Color*. University of Arkansas: lawrepository.ualr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2106&context=lawreview
[183] Hu, Y., Pereira, A. M., Gao, X., Campos, B. M., Derrington, E., Corgnet, B. Dreher, J.-C. (2021). "Right Temporoparietal Junction Underlies Avoidance of Moral Transgression in Autism Spectrum Disorder". *The Journal of Neuroscience: The Official Journal of the Society for Neuroscience*, *41*(8), 1699–1715. https://doi.org/10.1523/JNEUROSCI.1237-20.2020
[184] White, Gregory L., et al. *The Chilling Effects of Surveillance: Deindividuation and Reactance*. 1975.
[185] Feldman, B. (2014, January 7). *The Atlantic*: https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2014/01/burglars-who-revealed-cointelpro-have-come-forward/356754/

[186] Gelbspan, Ross. *Break-ins, Death Threats and the FBI: The Covert War Against the Central America Movement*. South End P, 1991, p. 14.
[187] Idem, p. 17.
[188] Idem, p. 27-28.
[189] Idem, p. 71-72.
[190] "Life In The Shadows" (19 de julio de 1987). Washington Post: https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/magazine/1987/07/19/life-in-the-shadows/c33d7d99-d590-41bf-9bfa-0c426bb41f25/
[191] Gelbspan, Ross. *Break-ins, Death Threats and the FBI*. South End P, 1991, p. 56.
[192] "Theodore Roosevelt's Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine" (1905). (15 de setiembre de 2021). National Archives: https://www.archives.gov/
[193] Roosevelt, Theodore. "National Life and Character." (1894) *Teaching American History*: teachingamericanhistory.org/document/national-life-and-character/
[194] McChesney, Robert W. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times*. New Press, 2016, p. 6.
[195] "American Aurora". (2018). New York Times: archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/first/r/rosenfel-aurora.html
[196] Weiner, Tim. *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA*. Anchor, 2008, p. 390.
[197] *Chilling Effects: NSA Surveillance Drives U.S. Writers to Self-Censor*. (12 de noviembre de 2013). PEN America: https://pen.org/research-resources/chilling-effects/
[198] Savage, Charlie. "N.S.A. Gets More Latitude to Share Intercepted Communications". *The New York Times,* Seccion A, Page 11. 12 de enero de 2017.
[199] Greenwald, Glenn. *No Place to Hide*. Macmillan, 2014, P. 11.
[200] Greenwald, G. (2012, April 8). "U.S. filmmaker repeatedly detained at border". *Salon*: www.salon.com/2012/04/08/u_s_filmmaker_repeatedly_detained_at_border/
[201] Jacksonville University Faculty Bylaws. (2019). https://www.ju.edu/provost/info/JUbylawsfinalcopy.pdf
[202] "Manhunting Timeline 2010 TOP SECRET//SI/TKHNOFORN": navigation, search. (n.d.): www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/Manhunting%20Timeline%202010.pdf
[203] "EFF 07022014 NBC GCHQ honey trap cyber attack." (2012). *Archive.org*: archive.org/stream/EFF_-_07022014-nbc-gchq_honey_trap_cyber_attack/EFF_-_07022014-nbc-gchq_honey_trap_cyber_attack_djvu.txt
[204] "The JEA indictments: Secret spreadsheets, a false 'death spiral'". Jacksonville Daily Record, Florida: https://www.jaxdailyrecord.com/article/the-jea-indictments-secret-spreadsheets-a-false-death-spiral
[205] Bauerlein, D. (2022, June 24). "FPL consultant obtained personal information, surveillance photo of journalist Nate Monroe". The Florida Times-Union website: https://www.jacksonville.com/story/news/local/2022/06/24/fpl-consultant-obtained-research-jacksonville-journalist-nate-monroe/7712000001/
[206] O'Carroll, L. (27 de setiembre de 2013). "Seymour Hersh on Obama, NSA and the 'pathetic' American media". *The Guardian*: https://www.theguardian.com/media/media-blog/2013/sep/27/seymour-hersh-obama-nsa-american-media
[207] McCombs, Maxwell E., and Donald L. Shaw. "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media." *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 36, no. 2, 1972, pp. 176–87. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2747787. Accessed 8 Jul. 2022.

[208] "Home | National Security Archive." *Nsarchive.gwu.edu*, nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB138/CIA%20Information%20Act%20-%20Chile%20Op%20File.pdf. Accessed 8 July 2022.
[209] "250,000 Germans Reported Held". *The New York Times*, 14 de febrero de 1947, p. 5. www.nytimes.com/1949/02/14/archives/250000-germans-reported-held.html
[210] Shaunak Agarkhedkar. "CIA, Ford Foundation, and Political Warfare" (6 de febrero de 2022). Substack: https://espionage.substack.com/p/cia-ford-foundation-and-political
[211] Leffler, Melvyn P., and Odd A. Westad. *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*. "The Cold War in Central America, 1975–1991" (John Coatsworth). Cambridge UP, 2010.
[212] McChesney, Robert W. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times*. New Press, 2016, p. 62.
[213] "Corporate Interests and Their Impact on News Coverage". The Institute for Applied & Professional Ethics. (2022). Ohio University. www.ohio.edu/ethics/2001-conferences/corporate-interests-and-their-impact-on-news-coverage/
[214] "Behind TV Analysts, Pentagon's Hidden Hand" (Published 2008). *The New York Times*. www.nytimes.com/2008/04/20/us/20generals.html
[215] "Journalist took $240,000 to push Bush education program". (2005, January 13). World Socialist: www.wsws.org/en/articles/2005/01/will-j13.html
[216] Cockburn, Alexander. "The Press Devours Its Own". *The Nation*, August 24, 1998, p. 10-24.
[217] LoGiurato, B. (16 de junio de 2013). "CBS' Bob Schieffer Destroys Edward Snowden In 90 Seconds". Business Insider: https://www.businessinsider.com/bob-schieffer-edward-snowden-face-the-nation-2013-6
[218] "Bloomberg News Killed Investigation, Fired Reporter, Then Sought To Silence His Wife". (2020, April 14). NPR. www.npr.org/2020/04/14/828565428/bloomberg-news-killed-investigation-fired-reporter-then-sought-to-silence-his-wi
[219] Montaner, Lidia B. *Atentados a la libertad de información y a los medios de comunicación en Chile, 1973-1987*. CENECA, 1988, p. 70.
[220] Robinson, Dan. "Spare the indignation: Voice of America has never been independent". Columbia Journalism Review. 30 de marzo de 2017.
[221] Uttaro, R. A. (1982). "The Voices of America in International Radio Propaganda". *Law and Contemporary Problems*, *45*(1), 103. https://doi.org/10.2307/1191297
[222] Media, A. "Americano Media anuncia un acuerdo de transmisión con Audacy". Prnewswire.com. www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/americano-media-anuncia-un-acuerdo-de-transmision-con-audacy-857592636.html
[223] Whitney, Joel. *Finks: How the C.I.A. Tricked the World's Best Writers*. OR Books, 2017.
[224] Itulain, Mikel. *Estados Unidos y el respeto a otras culturas y países*. España, Ediciones Libertarias, 2012.
[225] Sagué, M. "Cámara de Representantes de EEUU aprueba resolución que denuncia los horrores del socialismo". Radio y Televisión Martí: radiotelevision-marti.com/a/c%C3%A1mara-de-representantes-de-eeuu-aprueba-resoluci%C3%B3n-que-denuncia-los-horrores-del-socialismo-/349927.html

[226] Ver: Russia: life expectancy 1845-2020. Statista. (2020). www.statista.com/statistics/1041395/life-expectancy-russia-all-time y Eberstadt, Nick. "The Health Crisis in the USSR". International Journal of Epidemiology, vol. 35, no. 6, 2006, pp. 1384-1394.
[227] Leffler, Melvyn P., and Odd A. Westad. *The Cambridge History of the Cold War: Volume 3, Endings*. Cambridge UP, 2010.
[228] O'Rourke, John. *The History Great Irish Famine*. Dublin: J. Duffy and Co. 1902, p. 107.
[229] Trevelyan, Charles Edward. *The Irish Crisis*. United Kingdom, Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1848.
[230] Welch, Richard E. "American Atrocities in the Philippines: The Indictment and the Response." *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 43, no. 2, 1974, pp. 233-53. *JSTOR*, doi.org/10.2307/3637551 p. 241.
[231] *The Complete Works of Mark Twain.* United States, Artnow, 2017.
[232] "Hearts and Minds; Vietnam War 1974" (Documental, 2018) www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ov4wBozhMw
[233] "Unnatural Disaster" (7 de diciembre de 2012). *The New York Times*, p. BR22.
[234] Masani, Zareer. "Every Effort Must Be Made". (1970). International Churchill Society. winstonchurchill.org/
[235] Cannon, Lou. *President Reagan: the role of a lifetime*. United Kingdom, Simon & Schuster, 1991, p. 196.
[236] Courtois, Stéphane, Rémi Kauffer. *Le livre noir du communisme. Crimes, terreurs et répression*. Robert Laffont, 1997, p. 665.
[237] Cockburn, A. "Shocked Over Kerrey? It's How We Fought the War". 3 de mayo de 2001. *Los Angeles Times*. www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2001-may-03-me-58812-story.html
[238] Utsa Patnaik. Arindam Banerjee y C. P. Chandrasekhar editores, *Dispossession, Deprivation, and Development. Essays for Utsa Patnaik*, Columbia University Press, 2018.
[239] *Fox News*. "James Woolsey on the Russians' efforts to disrupt elections". 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=SpWai3kZ-gM
[240] Remarks by President Biden in Press Conference. The White House: www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/06/16/remarks-by-president-biden-in-press-conference-4/
[241] Willmetts, Simon. "The Burgeoning Fissures of Dissent: Allen Dulles and the Selling of the CIA in the Aftermath of the Bay of Pigs." *History*, vol. 100, no. 2 (340), 2015, pp. 167–88.
[242] Hunt, E. H., and Greg Aunapu. *American Spy: My Secret History in the CIA, Watergate and Beyond*. John Wiley & Sons, 2007.
[243] "Laura *Bush Roasts Husband"*. CBS News, mayo 2005. www.cbsnews.com/news/laura-bush-roasts-husband/
[244] "The Reach of War: Intelligence; Tenet's Leadership, His Pride, Faces Attack From Senate Panel as He Leaves C.I.A." (11 de julio de 2004). *The New York Times*. www.nytimes.com/2004/07/11/world/reach-war-intelligence-tenet-s-leadership-his-pride-faces-attack-senate-panel-he.html
[245] Talbot, David. *The Devil's Chessboard: Allen Dulles, the CIA, and the Rise of America's Secret Government*. Harper Perennial, 2016, p. 620.

[246] "Contribution Limits." *FEC.gov*, 2021, www.fec.gov/help-candidates-and-committees/candidate-taking-receipts/contribution-limits/.
[247] "Poll: Large Majority Opposes Supreme Court's Decision on Campaign Financing." *Washingtonpost.com*, 17 Feb. 2010, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/17/AR2010021701151.html.
[248] "The Supreme Court Throws out a State Law Requiring Nonprofits to Name Rich Donors." *NPR.org*, July 2021, www.npr.org/2021/07/01/1004062322/the-supreme-court-guts-a-state-law-requiring-nonprofits-to-name-their-rich-donor.
[249] "Hard-Nosed Advice from Veteran Lobbyist: 'Win Ugly or Lose Pretty' (Published 2014)." *The New York Times*, 2022, www.nytimes.com/2014/10/31/us/politics/pr-executives-western-energy-alliance-speech-taped.html.
[250] Sólo como ejemplo: Mendenhall, M. "Curry wants the city to borrow $208.3 million for Lot J development". Jax Daily, 13 de October de 2020: www.jaxdailyrecord.com/news/2020/oct/13/curry-wants-to-city-to-borrow-dollar208-3-million-for-lot-j-development/
[251] Bush, Chunping. "Dealing with the conflicts of interest of credit rating agencies: a balanced cure for the disease". *Capital Markets Law Journal*, vol. 17, no. 3, 2022, pp. 334-364.
[252] Hickel, Jason. *The Divide: A Brief Guide to Global Inequality and its Solutions*. Random House, 2017, p. 229.
[253] OECD. *Illicit Financial Flows from Developing Countries Measuring OECD Responses: Measuring OECD Responses*. OECD Publishing, 2014.
[254] How laws are written by corporations and interest groups, explained visually. (2018). USAToday: www.usatoday.com/pages/interactives/asbestos-sharia-law-model-bills-lobbyists-special-interests-influence-state-laws/
[255] Jacksonville University Media Services. "A Conversation with Aviva Chomsky", JU, 2017. www.youtube.com/watch?v=EmQAp9voEwM
[256] Gilens, M., & Page, B. I. (2014). Testing theories of American politics: Elites, interest groups, and average citizens. *Perspectives on Politics*, *12*(03), 564–581. https://doi.org/10.1017/s1537592714001595
[257] Mansur Gidfar. (2015, May 20). 20 years of data reveals that Congress doesn't care what you think. *Upworthy*: www.upworthy.com/20-years-of-data-reveals-that-congress-doesnt-care-what-you-think
[258] McChesney, Robert W. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy*. The New Press, 2016, p. 113.
[259] WhoWhatWhy. (2016, April 22). "Anniversary of an Attempt to Overthrow France's Charles De Gaulle. Did CIA Help?" whowhatwhy.org/politics/government-integrity/anniversary-attempt-overthrow-frances-charles-de-gaulle-cia-help/
[260] Bird, Kai. "The Color of Truth". (1998). New York Times. A1, 5 de diciembre de 1998.
[261] Creitz, C. "*RFK Jr. doubles down on allegation CIA involved in JFK's assassination: '60-year cover-up'*". Fox News, 9 de mayo de 2023. www.foxnews.com/media/rfk-jr-doubles-down-allegation-cia-involved-jfk-assassination-60-year-cover-up
[262] Majfud, Jorge. *La frontera salvaje. 200 años de fanatismo anglosajón en América Latina*. Rebelde Editores, febrero 2021, p. 323.

[263] Willmetts, Simon. "The Burgeoning Fissures of Dissent: Allen Dulles and the Selling of the CIA in the Aftermath of the Bay of Pigs." *History*, vol. 100, no. 2 (340), 2015, pp. 167–88.
[264] Cooper, K. (23 de agosto de 2021). "How to break into the FBI: 50 years later, Media burglars get local honors. WHYY (PBS): whyy.org/articles/how-to-break-into-the-fbi-50-years-later-media-burglars-get-local-honors/
[265] "Assault on the Left: The FBI and the Sixties Antiwar Movement" *Office of Justice Programs*. www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/
[266] Perry Fellwock . WikiLeaks. (2022). Wikileaks.org: wikileaks.org/wiki/Perry_Fellwock
[267] "The Clapper 'Lie,' and the Senate Intelligence Committee". *Federation of American Scientists*, 20 de abril de 2023. fas.org/publication/clapper-ssci/
[268] Greenwald, Glenn. *No Place to Hide.* Macmillan, 2014, p. 31.
[269] Idem, p. 42.
[270] "Awful Responsability." *Time*, 20 Aug. 1945, p. 20.
[271] America's Secret War. CIA FOIA (foia.cia.gov). (2016). Sitio de la CIA: https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp90-01208r000100050012-5
[272] Zegart, Amy B. *Spies, Lies, and Algorithms: The History and Future of American Intelligence*. Princeton UP, 2022, P. 29.
[273] "A Revived CIA Drone Strike Program? Comments on the New Policy." (2017, March 14). https://www.lawfareblog.com/revived-cia-drone-strike-program-comments-new-policy.
[274] Dimsdale, Joel E. *Dark Persuasion: A History of Brainwashing from Pavlov to Social Media*. Yale UP, 2021, pg. 60.
[275] Hudson, Michael. *Super Imperialism: The Origin and Fundamentals of U.S. World Dominance*. Islet, 2021, p. 1.
[276] Thompson, M. (2012). "Security: How Much Is Too Much? TIME magazine: nation.time.com/2011/08/29/security-how-much-is-too-much/
[277] Veciana, Antonio, and Carlos Harrison. *Trained to Kill: The Inside Story of CIA Plots against Castro, Kennedy, and Che*. Skyhorse, 2017.
[278] "Downgrade Foreign Policy" *The New York Times*, 1991, p. 15.
[279] Shuster, Bud "American Intelligence: Do We Still Need the C.I.A.?; Independence Means Integrity". *New York Times*. 19 de mayo de 1991, Sección 4, p. 17.
[280] Program, C. (n.d.). *Kennedy School of Government*. Retrieved. Disponible en el sitio de la CIA como documento desclasificado: www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/DOC_0005302423.pdf
[281] "Congressional Oversight of Intelligence Is a Joke." (2015, November 11). Cato Institute: https://www.cato.org/commentary/congressional-oversight-intelligence-joke.
[282] Majfud, Jorge. "Masacre que no se filtra, no existe." *Página12*, 24 Nov. 2021, www.pagina12.com.ar/384639-masacre-que-no-se-filtra-no-existe.
[283] Greenwald, Glenn. *No Place to Hide.* Macmillan, 2014, p. 43.
[284] Ackerman, S., & Roberts, D. (2013, June 7). Anger swells after NSA phone records court order revelations. The Guardian: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/06/obama-administration-nsa-verizon-records

[285] *The Official Senate Report on CIA Torture: Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency's Detention and Interrogation Program*. Simon & Schuster, 2015, p. 1.
[286] *The Official Senate Report on CIA Torture: Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency's Detention and Interrogation Program*. Simon & Schuster, 2015, p. II, 3.
[287] *The Official Senate Report on CIA Torture*. Simon & Schuster, 2015, p. 3.
[288] Idem, p. 4.
[289] Idem, p. 14
[290] Greenwald, Glenn. No Place to Hide. Macmillan, 2014, p. 141.
[291] Greenwald, G., y Fishman, A. (25 de marzo de 2015). "Netanyahu's Spying Denials Contradicted by Secret NSA Documents". The Intercept website: https://theintercept.com/2015/03/25/netanyahus-spying-denial-directly-contradicted-secret-nsa-documents/
[292] *The Official Senate Report on CIA Torture*. Simon & Schuster, 2015, p. 8.
[293] Ide, p. 401.
[294] Idem, p. 402-403.
[295] "Essay: How to Care for the CIA Orthans." *TIME.com*, 19 May 1967, content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,840898,00.html.
[296] Zegart, Amy B. *Spies, Lies, and Algorithms: The History and Future of American Intelligence*. Princeton UP, 2022, p. 26.
[297] "In-Q-Tel: The CIA's Tax-Funded Player in Silicon Valley." *NPR.org*, 16 July 2012, www.npr.org/transcripts/156839153.
[298] "The Engineering of Consent", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* No. 250 (March 1947), p. 113.
[299] "Wal-Mart Tries to Enlist Image Help (Published 2006)." *The New York Times*, 2022, www.nytimes.com/2006/05/12/business/12walmart.html.
[300] Newman, J. (11 de diciembre de 2009). "Google's Schmidt Roasted for Privacy Comments". *PCWorld*: https://www.pcworld.com/article/515472/googles_schmidt_roasted_for_privacy_comments.html
[301] Matyszczyk, C. (11 de octubre de 2013). "Zuckerberg buys four new houses for, um, privacy". CNET: https://www.cnet.com/culture/zuckerberg-buys-four-new-houses-for-um-privacy/
[302] Greenwald, Glenn. *No Place to Hide*. Macmillan, 2014, p. 113-115.
[303] "Advisers urge Obama to dump NSA phone database". (18 de diciembre de 2013). *Washington Post* www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/nsa-shouldnt-keep-phone-database-review-board-recommends/2013/12/18/f44fe7c0-67fd-11e3-a0b9-249bbb34602c_story.html
[304] Greenwald, Glenn. *No Place to Hide*. Macmillan, 2014, p. 168.
[305] Data Protection with Microsoft Privacy Principles. Microsoft Trust Center. (2018). www.microsoft.com/en-us/trust-center/privacy
[306] Data Privacy in the Trusted Cloud. Microsoft Azure. (2022). azure.microsoft.com/en-us/explore/trusted-cloud/privacy/
[307] Sneddon, Joey. "NSA Wanted Backdoor Access in Linux, Says Linus Torvalds' Father." *OMG! Ubuntu!*, OMG! Ubuntu!, 19 Nov. 2013, www.omgubuntu.co.uk/2013/11/nsa-ask-linus-torvalds-include-backdoors-linux-father-says-yes.

[308] Perlroth, Nicole. "How Spy Tech Firms Let Governments See Everything on a Smartphone" *New York Times,* 2 de setiembre de 2016. www.nytimes.com/2016/09/03/technology/nso-group-how-spy-tech-firms-let-governments-see-everything-on-a-smartphone.html
[309] Alexzee. "Linus Torvalds Was Approached by NSA for Backdoor in Linux - Nils Torvalds (Father of Linus)." *Linux.org*, 3 Feb. 2020, www.linux.org/threads/linus-torvalds-was-approached-by-nsa-for-backdoor-in-linux-nils-torvalds-father-of-linus.27390/.
[310] Majfud, J. "Masacre que no se filtra, no existe". *Página12*: www.pagina12.com.ar/384639-masacre-que-no-se-filtra-no-existe
[311] Greenwald, Glenn. *No Place to Hide*. Macmillan, 2014, p. 47-48.
[312] Singer, Peter W., and Emerson T. Brooking. Likewar: The Weaponization of Social Media. Eamon Dolan Books, 2018, p. 77.
[313] Garber, M. (2013, June 9). "Meet Boundless Informant, the NSA's Secret Tool for Tracking Global Surveillance Data". *The Atlantic*: https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2013/06/meet-boundless-informant-the-nsas-secret-tool-for-tracking-global-surveillance-data/276686/
[314] WikiLeaks, "The Spy Files". (2013): https://wikileaks.org/the-spyfiles.html
[315] The internet in China: a tool for freedom or suppression?" (2006). chrissmith.house.gov/uploadedfiles/2006.02.15_the_internet_in_china_-_a_tool_for_freedom_or_suppression.pdf
[316] "Pacto con el diablo: congresista de Estados Unidos denuncia vínculos del Gobierno de Argentina con China". Semana.com, marzo 2023: www.semana.com/mundo/articulo/pacto-con-el-diablo-congresista-de-estados-unidos-denuncia-vinculos-del-gobierno-de-argentina-con-china/202300/
[317] Idem.
[318] Sun, T. "Senator Lindsey Graham says US must back Ukraine to avoid China taking over Taiwan" *YouTube* www.youtube.com/watch?v=R8ejPbK99B0
[319] Kliegman, A. "*Trump says biggest threat to America is not Russia but USA-hating people, including 'godless Marxists'"* (17 de marzo de 2023). Fox News. www.foxnews.com/politics/trump-says-biggest-threat-america-not-russia-but-usa-hating-people-godless-marxists
[320] "In 1945, George Orwell wrote an introduction to *Animal Farm*. It was not printed, and remained unknown till now". *The New York Times*. 8 de octubre de 1972, p. 142.
[321] Haring, B. (2022, April 2). "Google Tells Publishers They May Be Demonetized For Ukraine Content". deadline.com/2022/04/google-threatens-demonetization-publishers-on-ukraine-war-coverage-1234992917/
[322] Dave, P. "YouTube blocks Russian state-funded media channels globally". Reuters, 11 de marzo de 2022. www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/youtube-blocks-russian-state-funded-media-channels-globally-2022-03-11/
[323] Bernays, Edward L. *Propaganda*. United States, Ig Publishing, 2004, p. 37.
[324] "Secrecy. American Civil Liberties Union" (15 de febrero de 2022). *American Civil Liberties Union*: https://www.aclu.org/issues/national-security/secrecy
[325] Majfud, Jorge. *La frontera salvaje. 200 años de fanatismo anglosajón en América Latina*. Rebelde Editores, febrero 2021.

[326] Cardozo, Fabián. "EEUU Carece de una política estratégica para América Latina." *Sputnik Mundo*, 15 June 2022, mundo.sputniknews.com/20220615/eeuu-carece-de-una-politica-estrategica-para-america-latina-1126795844.html.
[327] McChesney, Robert W. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times*. The New Press, 2016, 62.
[328] Wooley, Samuel. *The Reality Game. How the next wave of technology will break the truth*. Endeavor, 2020.
[329] Staff, Reuters. "Ukraine Bans Russian TV Channels for Airing War 'Propaganda.'" *U.S.*, 19 Aug. 2014, www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-television/ukraine-bans-russian-tv-channels-for-airing-war-propaganda-idUSKBN0GJ1QM20140819.
[330] "Ukraine Bans Independent Russian TV Channel Dozhd." *Rsf.org*, 22 June 2022, rsf.org/en/ukraine-bans-independent-russian-tv-channel-dozhd.
[331] Ryan, Missy, et al. "Outmatched in Military Might, Ukraine Has Excelled in the Information War." *Washington Post*, The Washington Post, 16 Mar. 2022, www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/03/16/ukraine-zelensky-information-war/.
[332] "U.S. Used Billions of Leaflets in Indochina War (Published 1971)." *The New York Times*, 2022. www.nytimes.com/1971/06/03/archives/us-used-billions-of-leaflets-in-indochina-war-among-functions-are.html.
[333] Breitman, Kendall. "Half of Republicans still believe WMDs found in Iraq". *Político*, 7 de enero de 2015. www.politico.com/story/2015/01/poll-republicans-wmds-iraq-114016
[334] "A Genocide Incited on Facebook, with Posts from Myanmar's Military (Published 2018)." *The New York Times*, 2022, www.nytimes.com/2018/10/15/technology/myanmar-facebook-genocide.html.
[335] "In Myanmar, a Facebook Blackout Brings More Anger than a Genocide Charge (Published 2018)." *The New York Times*, 2022, www.nytimes.com/2018/08/31/world/asia/myanmar-genocide-facebook-military.html.
[336] *Gapminder Misconception Study* 2017. Gapminder. www.gapminder.org/ignorance/studies/gms/
[337] *Bioastronomy News: Newsletter of the International Astronomical Union Commission* 51, vol. 7, números 3 y 4, Lemarchand editor, 1995. Referido por Noam Chomsky en nuestra compilación de textos de Chomsky publciado como *Ilusionistas*, Ediciones Irreverentes, 2012. También en *Sin Azúcar*, Humanus, 2022, p. 128.
[338] "A.I. Poses 'Risk of Extinction,' Industry Leaders Warn" *The New York Times*, 30 de mayo de 2023. www.nytimes.com/2023/05/30/technology/ai-threat-warning.html
[339] Huppke, R. "Just a quick heads up: AI-powered robots will kill us. K, bye." USA Today. 9 de julio de 2023.
[340] McChesney, Robert W. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times*. New Press, 2016, p. 29.
[341] "There's No Business Like Show Business. In fact, it just may be the weirdest business on earth. Today a handful of powerful CEOs are battling for the hearts, minds, and eyeballs of the world's six billion people. But the harder they fight, the more they need each other". June 22, 1998. *Fortune*.com: archive.fortune.com/magazines/fortune/fortune_archive/1998/06/22/244178/index.htm

[342] Mullins, B., Ballhaus, R., Day, C., West, J., & Jones, C. (2022, October 13). "The Regulators of Facebook, Google and Amazon Also Invest in the Companies' Stocks". WSJ: www.wsj.com/articles/
[343] McChesney, Robert W. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times*. New Press, 2016, p. 19.
[344] "A communications oligopoly on steroids". *Equitable Growth*. (2018, June 6): equitablegrowth.org/research-paper/communications-oligopoly-steroids/?long-form=true
[345] Woolley, Samuel C., and Philip N. Howard. *Computational Propaganda*. Oxford Studies in Digital Poli, 2018, p. 28.
[346] Wooley, Samuel. *The Reality Game. How the next wave of technology will break the truth*. Endeavor, 2020, pg. 139.
[347] Majfud, Jorge. "La sociedad desobediente". Biagini, Hugo E. *Diccionario del pensamiento alternativo*. Editorial Biblos, 2008, p. 506-508.
[348] Majfud, J. "Las fronteras mentales del tribalismo". *Red Voltaire*, 6 de setiembre de 2004. www.voltairenet.org/article122037.html
[349] "The Far-Right Christian Quest for Power: 'We Are Seeing Them Embold-ened.'" *The New York Times*, 2022, www.nytimes.com/2022/07/08/us/christian-nationalism-politicians.html.
[350] Graham, Megan. "Fake Followers in Influencer Marketing Will Cost Brands $1.3 Billion This Year, Report Says." *CNBC*, CNBC, 24 July 2019, www.cnbc.com/2019/07/24/fake-followers-in-influencer-marketing-will-cost-1point3-billion-in-2019.html.
[351] Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Saint Lucia, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973, p. 474.
[352] "Stanford Researchers Find Students Have Trouble Judging the Credibility of Information Online." *Stanford Graduate School of Education*, 21 Nov. 2016, ed.stanford.edu/news/stanford-researchers-find-students-have-trouble-judging-credibility-information-online. / Edu, Sheg. Evaluating Information: The Cornerstone Of Civic Online Reasoning Executive Summary Stanford History Education Group Produced With The Support Of The Robert R. Mccormick Foundation. 22 Nov. 2016, stacks.stanford.edu/
[353] Bump, Philip. "How Facebook Plans to Become One of the Most Powerful Tools in Politics." *Washington Post*, The Washington Post, 26 Nov. 2014, www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2014/11/26/how-facebook-plans-to-become-one-of-the-most-powerful-tools-in-politics/.
[354] Singer, Peter W., and Emerson T. Brooking. *Likewar: The Weaponization of Social Media*. Eamon Dolan Books, 2018 (p. 135).
[355] Huszár, Ferenc, et al. "Algorithmic Amplification of Politics on Twitter." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol. 119, no. 1, Dec. 2021, https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2025334119.
[356] "Why the Right Wing Has a Massive Advantage on Facebook." *POLITICO*, 26 Sept. 2020, www.politico.com/news/2020/09/26/facebook-conservatives-2020-421146.
[357] "Partisanship, Propaganda, and Disinformation: Online Media and the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election." *Berkman Klein Center*, 2019, cyber.harvard.edu/publications/2017/08/mediacloud.

[358] Onehand77. (2013). "Kissinger, Rockefeller, War Crimes and Bilderberg" by David Knight. www.youtube.com/watch?v=MuhraDTCK5E
[359] Donald J. Trump (2023). *Truth Social*. truthsocial.com/@real-DonaldTrump/posts/110034402803297281
[360] "Remarks at the Opening of 'the American Cowboy' Exhibit at the Library of Congress." *Ronald Reagan*, 24 de marzo de 1983, www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/remarks-opening-american-cowboy-exhibit-library-congress.
[361] Woolley, Samuel C., and Philip N. Howard. *Computational Propaganda.* Oxford Studies in Digital Poli, 2018, p.136.
[362] Ortellado, Pablo y Esther Solano. "Nova Direita Nas Ruas? Uma análise do descompasso entre manifestantes e os convocantes dos protestos antigoverno de 2015." *Perseu: História, Memória E Política*, no. 11, 2015, revistaperseu.fpabramo.org.br/index.php/revista-perseu/article/view/97.
[363] "Graban el aval de Temer al pago de coimas". *Página12*, 18 de mayo de 2017, www.pagina12.com.ar/38407-graban-el-aval-de-temer-al-pago-de-coimas.
[364] Goytisolo, Juan. *Makbara*. Barcelona: Editorial Seix Barral: 1980, p. 28.
[365] McChesney, Robert W. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times*. The New Press, 2016, p. 291.
[366] Broadcasting Station Survey, Jan 1, 1926. Edwin H. Colpitts Papers, Box 77. American Telephone and telegraph Archives, Warren NJ.
[367] McChesney, Robert. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy:* New Press, 2016, p. 193.
[368] "Educators and the Fight for Public Media". (2020, December 8). Rethinking Schools: rethinkingschools.org/articles/educators-and-the-fight-for-public-media/
[369] McChesney, Robert W. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy.* New Press, 2016, p. 201.
[370] "Public Interest, Convenience, and Necessity in a Nutshell". *Education by Radio*. 28 de abril de 1932, p. 61. ia800809.us.archive.org/12/items/educationbyradio02nati/educationbyradio02nati.pdf
[371] McChesney, Robert W. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy.* New Press, 2016, p. 201.
[372] Carta de Graham Spry a Armstrong Perry, fechada el 12 de mayo de 1932. Carpeta 873, 45 PF. (Citado por McChesney, p. 233)
[373] "A commercial code revision tries to take on the task of legislating the Internet" (1998). *The New York Times*. www.nytimes.com/1998/06/22/business/technology-digital-commerce-commercial-code-revision-tries-take-task-legislating.html
[374] *WPA Handicraft Project. 8601. Milawakee, WI. Milawakee State Teachers College.* ia800809.us.archive.org/12/items/educationbyradio02nati/educationbyradio02nati.pdf (páginas 41, 61)
[375] McChesney, Robert W. *Telecommunications, Mass Media, and Democracy: The Battle for the Control of U.S. Broadcasting, 1928-1935*. Oxford UP, 1995, p. 243.
[376] McChesney, Robert W. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy*. The New Press, 2016, p. 218.
[377] Idem, p. 129.
[378] "The death of an icon". The Economist (1998, October 22). www.economist.com/science-and-technology/1998/10/22/the-death-of-an-icon
[379] Rebecca Quick, "U.S. Sidesteps Thorny Issue of Internet Names," Wall Street Journal, June 4, 1998, p. 26.
[380] McChesney, Robert W. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times*. New P, The, 2016, p. 47.

[381] Ralph Reed. Discurso en el Dartmouth College, C-Span, junio de 1998.
[382] Jurgen Habermas. "There are Alternatives". NLR I/231, Setiembre–octubre 1998. New Left Review. newleftreview.org/issues/i231/articles/jurgen-habermas-there-are-alternatives
[383] McChesney, Robert W. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy.* The New Press, 2016, p. 246.
[384] "US television network CBS pulls program to please corporate sponsor". (2001, August 21). World Socialist Web Site: www.wsws.org/en/articles/2001/08/cbs-a21.html
[385] *Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of the Congress*. United States, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1937, p. 2528.
[386] Griffin, G. Edward. *The creature from Jekyll Island*. United States, American Media, 1995.
[387] McChesney, Robert W. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times*. New P, The, 2016, liv.
[388] Roberts, Kayleigh. "The Psychology of Begging to Be Followed on Twitter". *The Atlantic*, 26 Feb. 2014, www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/02/the-psychology-of-begging-to-be-followed-on-twitter/283947/.
[389] Adgate, B. "Agencies Agree; 2021 Was A Record Year For Ad Spending" *Forbes*. 9 de noviembre de 2022. www.forbes.com/sites/bradadgate/2021/12/08/agencies-agree-2021-was-a-record-year-for-ad-spending-with-more-growth-expected-in-2022/?sh=18dad5f77bc6
[390] Majfud, Jorge. *La frontera salvaje. 200 años de fanatismo anglosajón en América Latina*. Rebelde Editores, febrero 2021, p. 170. También: "Letter from Frederick Funston to Theodore Roosevelt". Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University. "*Hearts and Minds*" Interview with William C. (William Childs) Westmoreland, 1981.
[391] McSpadden, Kevin. "You Now Have a Shorter Attention Span than a Goldfish." *Time*, 14 May 2015, time.com/3858309/attention-spans-goldfish/.
[392] Andersson, Hilary. "Social Media Apps Are 'Deliberately' Addictive to Users." *BBC News*, 3 July 2018, www.bbc.com/news/technology-44640959.
[393] Retter, Emily. "Tech Mogul Bill Gates Says He Banned Kids from Mobile Phones until They Were 14." *Mirror*, 21 Apr. 2017, www.mirror.co.uk/tech/billionaire-tech-mogul-bill-gates-10265298.
[394] Price, Catherine. "Trapped; The Secret Ways Social Media Is Built to Be Addictive (and What You Can Do to Fight Back)." *Sciencefocus.com*, BBC Science Focus Magazine, 29 Oct. 2018, www.sciencefocus.com/future-technology/trapped-the-secret-ways-social-media-is-built-to-be-addictive-and-what-you-can-do-to-fight-back/.
[395] McChesney, Robert W. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times*. New P, The, 2016, p. 45.
[396] Lakritz, T. (26 de agosto de 2021). "Athletes who have fought for equal pay in women's sports". *Insider*. www.insider.com/athletes-olympians-equal-pay-womens-sports#billie-jean-king-was-a-champion-of-equal-pay-in-womens-sports-in-the-1970s-1

[397] Romaine, J. (2022, March 11). "Single women spend more on health insurance than single men, study says". *The Hill*, 11 de marzo de 2022.
[398] "U.S. Soccer and Women's Players Agree to Settle Equal Pay Lawsuit". (2022). *The New York Times*. www.nytimes.com/2022/02/22/sports/soccer/us-womens-soccer-equal-pay.html
[399] "New Endorsements for College Athletes Resurface an Old Concern: Sex Sells". (2022). *The New York Times*. www.nytimes.com/2022/11/08/sports/ncaabasketball/olivia-dunne-haley-jones-endorsements.html
[400] "Propaganda - Goebbels' Principles." *Smu.edu*, 2022, www.physics.smu.edu/pseudo/Propaganda/goebbels.html.
[401] Fan R, Zhao J, Chen Y, Xu K (2014) Anger Is More Influential than Joy: Sentiment Correlation in Weibo. PLoS ONE 9(10): e110184. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0110184
[402] "Is Social Media Threatening Teens' Mental Health and Well-Being?" *Columbia University Irving Medical Center*, 20 May 2021, www.cuimc.columbia.edu/news/social-media-threatening-teens-mental-health-and-well-being.
[403] "No More FOMO: Limiting Social Media Decreases Loneliness and Depression | Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology." *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 2018, guilfordjournals.com/doi/10.1521/jscp.2018.37.10.751.
[404] "Sean Parker: Facebook Takes Advantage of 'Vulnerability in Human Psychology.'" *Cbsnews.com*, CBS News, 9 Nov. 2017, www.cbsnews.com/news/sean-parker-facebook-takes-advantage-of-vulnerability-in-human-psychology/.
[405] "Facebook Calls Links to Depression Inconclusive. These Researchers Disagree." *NPR.org*, 18 May 2021, www.npr.org/2021/05/18/
[406] Snefjella, Bryor, et al. "National Character Stereotypes Mirror Language Use: A Study of Canadian and American Tweets." *PLOS ONE*, edited by Ryan L Boyd, vol. 13, no. 11, Nov. 2018, p. e0206188, doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0206188.
[407] "A Stanford Study of Japanese and U.S. Twitter Users Sheds Light on Why Emotional Posts Are More Likely to Go Viral." *Stanford.edu*, 8 Sept. 2021, news.stanford.edu/press-releases/2021/09/08/cultural-values-ral-social-media/.
[408] Woolley, Samuel C., and Philip N. Howard. *Computational Propaganda.* Oxford Studies in Digital Poli, 2018, p. 46.
[409] Fanon, Frantz. *Les damnés de la terre.* Paris : Françoise Maspero, 1968, p. 13. ("*La bourgeoisie colonialiste, quand elle enregistre l'impossibilité pour elle de maintenir sa domination sur les pays coloniaux, décide de mener un combat d'arrière-garde sur le terrain de la culture, des valeurs, des techniques, etc. […] La fameux principe qui veut que tous les hommes soient égaux trouvera son illusion aux colonies dès lors que le colonisé posera qu'il est l'égal du colon*".)
[410] Fanon, Frantz. *Peau noire, masques blancs*. [1952] Préface (1952) et postface (1965) de Francis Jeason. Paris, Éditions du Senil, 1965, p. 99: "*Je commence à souffrir de ne pas être un Blanc dans la mesure où l'homme blanc m'impose une discrimination, fait de moi un colonisé, m'extorque toute valeur, tutte originalité, me dit que je parasite le monde. […]*
Alors j'essaierai tut simplement de me faire blanc, c'est-à-dire j'obligerai la Blanc à reconnaître mon humanité. Mais, nous dira M. Mannoni, vous ne pouvez pas, car il existe au profond de vous un complexe de dépendance. […] le Blanc obéit à un

complexe d'autorité, à un complexe de chef, cependant que la Malgache obéit à un complexe de dépendance. Tout le monde est satisfait".
[411] Majfud, Jorge. *Cyborgs*. Izana Editores, Madrid, 2012.
[412] Business Insider UK. "Donald Trump Quoted Bots on Twitter 150 Times, Analysis Claims." *Business Insider*, Insider, 11 Apr. 2016, www.businessinsider.com/donald-trump-quote-bots-twitter-2016-4.
[413] Woolley, Samuel C., and Philip N. Howard. *Computational Propaganda: Political Parties, Politicians, and Political Manipulation on Social Media*. Oxford Studies in Digital Poli, 2018, p. 7.
[414] Zaller, John R., and Zaller J. R. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge UP, 1992, p. 10.
[415] "Meet Tay - Microsoft A.I. Chatbot with Zero Chill." *Archive.org*, 2016, web.archive.org/web/20160323194709/tay.ai/.
[416] Majfud, Jorge. "La tiranía del lenguaje (colonizado)." *Página12*, 20 Feb. 2022.
[417] Sandvig, Christian, et al. "When the Algorithm Itself Is a Racist: Diagnosing Ethical Harm in the Basic Components of Software." *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 10, 2016, pp. 4972–90, social.cs.uiuc.edu/papers/pdfs/Sandvig-IJoC.pdf.
[418] "Webcam Can't Recognize Black Face." *Thestar.com*, thestar.com, 23 Dec. 2009, www.thestar.com/news/2009/12/23/webcam_cant_recognize_black_face.html.
[419] Dyer, Richard. White. London: Routledge, 1997.
[420] Woolley, Samuel C., and Philip N. Howard. *Computational Propaganda*. Oxford Studies in Digital Poli, 2018, p. 49-51.
[421] Bill Moyers Journal . Senator Dick Durbin. PBS. (2012): www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/05082009/profile.html
[422] McChesney, Robert W. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times*. New P, The, 2016, p. xl.
[423] Nowlan, Robert A. *The American Presidents From Polk to Hayes: What They Did, What They Said & What Was Said About Them*. Outskirts P, 2016, p. 599.
[424] Henry C. Simons, *Economic Policy for a Free Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948).
[425] Message to Congress on Curbing Monopolies. The American Presidency Project. (2022). www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/message-congress-curbing-monopolies
[426] Woolley, Samuel C., and Philip N. Howard. *Computational Propaganda: Political Parties, Politicians, and Political Manipulation on Social Media*. Oxford UP, 2018.
[427] Guynn, Jessica. "Did Ex-Twitter CEO Censor Abuse of President Obama?" *USA Today*, 11 Aug. 2016, www.usatoday.com/story/tech/news/2016/08/11/did-twitter-ceo-dick-costolo-censor-responses-president-obama/88568558/.
[428] Cobain, Ian. "Revealed: US Spy Operation That Manipulates Social Media." *The Guardian*, 17 Mar. 2011, www.theguardian.com/technology/2011/mar/17/us-spy-operation-social-networks.
[429] Stokols, Eli, et al. "Cruz Partners with Donor's 'Psychographic' Firm." *Político*, https://www.politico.com/story/2015/07/ted-cruz-donor-for-data-119813.

[430] "Symantec Names Brazil as Eighth-Largest Global Source of Malicious Botnet Activity - Nearshore Americas." *Nearshore Americas*, 2014, nearshoreamericas.com/brazil-one-major-sources-malicious-activity-cyber-world-symantec-study/.
[431] NIC.br. "CERT.br Registra Aumento de Ataques de Negação de Serviço Em 2014." *CGI.br - Comitê Gestor Da Internet No Brasil*, 2014, www.cgi.br/noticia/releases/cert-br-registra-aumento-de-ataques-de-negacao-de-servico-em-2014/.
[432] Majfud, Jorge. *Hacia qué patrias del silencio: memorias de un desaparecido*. Montevideo, Editorial Graffiti, 1996.
[433] Dizikes, Peter. "Study: On Twitter, False News Travels Faster than True Stories." *MIT News | Massachusetts Institute of Technology*, Mar. 2018, news.mit.edu/2018/study-twitter-false-news-travels-faster-true-stories-0308. Soroush Vosoughi, Deb Roy, and Sinan Aral. / "The Spread of True and False News Online". MIT initiative on the digital economy research brief. *Science* 359. No. 6380, 9 de marzo de 2018.
[434] Majfud, Jorge. *U.S.A. ¿Confía Dios En Nosotros?* Publicacions de la Universitat De València, 2017.
[435] Sydell, Laura. "We Tracked down a Fake-News Creator in the Suburbs. Here's What We Learned." NPR, NPR, 23 Nov. 2016, https://www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2016/11/23/503146770/npr-finds-the-head-of-a-covert-fake-news-operation-in-the-suburbs.
[436] Nightingale SJ, Farid H. AI-synthesized faces are indistinguishable from real faces and more trustworthy. Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A. 2022 Feb 22;119(8):e2120481119. doi: 10.1073/pnas.2120481119. PMID: 35165187; PMCID: PMC8872790.
[437] "On the ground with the QAnon believers who flocked to Dallas for the grand return of JFK Jr." E.J. Dickson. *Rolling Stones*. https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-news/qanon-kennedy-jfk-jr-dealey-plaza-dallas-1251929/.
[438] Lorenz, Taylor. "Meet the Woman behind Libs of Tiktok, Secretly Fueling the Right's Outrage Machine." *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 19 Apr. 2022, https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/04/19/libs-of-tiktok-right-wing-media/.
[439] Bernstein, Joseph. "How Prageru Quietly Became One of the Right's Loudest VoicesHow Prageru Is Winning the Right Wing Culture War without Donald Trump." *BuzzFeed News*, BuzzFeed News, 10 Nov. 2018, https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/josephbernstein/prager-university.
[440] Idem.
[441] Prager, Dennis. "Trump, Conservatives, and the 'Principles' Question." *National Review*, National Review, 6 Sept. 2016, https://www.nationalreview.com/2016/09/never-trump-supporters-dont-realize-hillary-clinton-worse-option-donald-trump/.
[442] "Antifa Didn't Storm the Capitol. Just Ask the Rioters." *NPR.org*, 2 Mar. 2021, www.npr.org/2021/03/02/972564176/antifa-didnt-storm-the-capitol-just-ask-the-rioters.
[443] WRAL. "Hannity says Elon Musk bid exposed Twitter 'shadow ban'". WRAL.com. 3 de mayo de 2022.

[444] McChesney, Robert W. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times*. New P, The, 2016, p. li.
[445] "As Facebook Raised a Privacy Wall, It Carved an Opening for Tech Giants (Published 2018)." *The New York Times*, 2022, www.nytimes.com/2018/12/18/technology/facebook-privacy.html.
[446] Guess, Andrew, et al. "Less than You Think: Prevalence and Predictors of Fake News Dissemination on Facebook." *Science Advances*, vol. 5, no. 1, Jan. 2019, https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aau4586.
[447] Majfud, Jorge. "Las fronteras mentales del tribalismo." *Red Voltaire*, Red Voltaire, 6 Sept. 2004, www.voltairenet.org/article122037.html.
[448] Greenwald, Glenn. *No Place to Hide*. Macmillan, 2014, p. 167.
[449] Stokols, Eli, et al. "Cruz Partners with Donor's 'Psychographic' Firm." *POLITICO*, https://www.politico.com/story/2015/07/ted-cruz-donor-for-data-119813.
[450] Woolley, 39.
[451] Woolley, 34.
[452] Silverman,Ruth, C. (2022, October 29). "How Google's Ad Business Funds Disinformation Around the World". www.propublica.org/article/google-alphabet-ads-fund-disinformation-covid-elections
[453] Varoufakis, Yanis. "W*hy we must save the EU*". *The Guardian*, 5 de abril de 2016. www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/05/yanis-varoufakis-why-we-must-save-the-eu
[454] Manjoo, Farhad. "What BlackRock, Vanguard and State Street Are Doing to the Economy". *The New York Times*, 22 de mayo de 2022.
[455] Gilens, M., & Page, B. I. (2014). "Testing theories of American politics: Elites, interest groups, and average citizens". *Perspectives on Politics*, *12* (03), 564–581. doi.org/10.1017/s1537592714001595
[456] Study: Congress literally doesn't care what you think. (2014). Retrieved November 5, 2022, from Represent.Us website: https://act.represent.us/sign/problempoll-fba/
[457] Twitter. 23 de abril de 2023. twitter.com/elonmusk/status/1650008972865224704
[458] "At the Movies; Disney Hires Kissinger" (Published 1997). *The New York Times*. www.nytimes.com/1997/10/10/movies/at-the-movies-disney-hires-kissinger.html
[459] Nowlan, Robert A. *The American Presidents From Polk to Hayes: What They Did, What They Said & What Was Said About Them*. Outskirts P, 2016, p. 599.
[460] Chomsky, Noam. *Rogue States: The Rule of Force in World Affairs*. United Kingdom, South End Press, 2000, p. 208.
[461] Hickel, Jason. *The Divide: A Brief Guide to Global Inequality and its Solutions*. Random House, 2017, p. 208, 209.
[462] Hickel, Jason. *The Divide: A Brief Guide to Global Inequality and its Solutions*. Random House, 2017, p. 208, 211.
[463] "¿Quién vigila a los guardianes? Los conflictos de interés de los árbitros de inversiones". Corporate Europe Observatory. (2013). Corporateeurope.org: corporateeurope.org/es/trade/2013/03/cap-tulo-4-qui-n-vigila-los-guardianes-los-conflictos-de-inter-de-los-rbitros-de

[464] Estevez-Dovan, A. (2016). Bernie Sanders sobre Uruguay y las corporaciones trasnacionales www.youtube.com/watch?v=9IWHo5itVBY
[465] Majfud, Jorge. *La frontera salvaje. 200 años de fanatismo anglosajón en América Latina*. Rebelde Editores, febrero 2021, p. 445.
[466] *Earth Overshoot Day.* MoveTheDate. www.overshootday.org/
[467] *Bioastronomy News: Newsletter of the International Astronomical Union Commission* 51, vol. 7, números 3 y 4, Lemarchand editor, 1995. Referido por Noam Chomsky en nuestra compilación de textos de Chomsky publciado como *Ilusionistas*, Ediciones Irreverentes, 2012. También en *Sin Azúcar*, Humanus, 2022, p. 128.
[468] "A.I. Poses 'Risk of Extinction,' Industry Leaders Warn" *The New York Times*, 30 de mayo de 2023. www.nytimes.com/2023/05/30/technology/ai-threat-warning.html
[469] Cereseto, S., & Waitzkin, H. (1986). "Capitalism, Socialism, and the Physical Quality of Life. *International Journal of Health Services*", *16*(4), 643–658. doi.org/10.2190/ad12-7ryt-xvar-3r2u
[470] Lena, H. F., & London, B. (1993). "The Political and Economic Determinants of Health Outcomes: A Cross-National Analysis". *International Journal of Health Services*, *23*(3), 585–602. doi.org/10.2190/equy-acg8-x59f-ae99
[471] Sullivan, D., & Hickel, J. (2023). "Capitalism and extreme poverty: A global analysis of real wages, human height, and mortality since the long 16th century". *World Development*, *161*, 106026. doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2022.106026
[472] "The real problem with Britain's water companies". *The Economist*, 5 de julio de 2023.
[473] Williams, Aime, Camila Hodgson y Attracta Mooney. *Financial Times*, 12 de marzo de 2023. www.ft.com/content/6005c44f-6786-49ba-8f0c-bf54fc55212f
[474] Majfud, Jorge. *BRIC, la comunidad fantasma*. Instituto Argentino para el Desarrollo Económico, 26 de junio de 2009. IADE. www.iade.org.ar/noticias/bric-la-comunidad-fantasma
[475] Rowett, C. (2022). "Philosophical Reflections on the Idea of a Universal Basic Income". *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplements, 91*, 81-102. Werner, A., Lim, M. "The Ethics of the Living Wage: A Review and Research Agenda". *J Bus Ethics* 137, 433–447 (2016).
[476] King, Martin Luther. *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos Or Community?* United States, Beacon Press, 2010.
[477] "Whistle-Blower to Accuse Facebook of Contributing to Jan. 6 Riot, Memo Says." *The New York Times*, 2022, www.nytimes.com/2021/10/02/technology/whistle-blower-facebook-memo.html.
[478] Mikkelsen, Randall. "CIA, FBI Computers Used for Wikipedia Edits." *U.S.*, 16 Aug. 2007, www.reuters.com/article/us-security-wikipedia/cia-fbi-computers-used-for-wikipedia-edits-idUSN1642896020070816.
[479] McChesney, Robert W. Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times. New P, The, 2016, p. L.
[480] Biagini, Hugo E., and Hugo E. Biagini. *Diccionario Del Pensamiento Alternativo*. Editorial Biblos, 2015.
[481] McChesney, Robert W. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times*. New P, The, 2016, p. xlii-xliv.

[482] Brown, Albert Gallatin. *Speeches, Messages, and Other Writings of the Hon. Albert G. Brown: A Senator in Congress Fronm the State of Mississippi*. United States, J. B. Smith & Company, 1859, p. 595.